Wit Wisdom & Folly

BY

J. Villin Marmery

ILLUSTRATED BY

ALFRED TOUCHEMOLIN

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C. K. OGDEN

67

WIT, WISDOM AND FOLLY

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Pen and Pencil Flashes

BY

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'PROGRESS OF SCIENCE,' AND 'MANUAL OF THE HISTORY OF ART

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PREFACE

In these times of ours the general reader has no leisure to take up long or serious books. The days of three-volume novels are over. The busy man or woman of our *fin de siècle* has enough to do to keep pace on the path of life abreast with the multitude crowding every road, and hours of relaxation are devoted to light reading or outdoor exercise. When a person has perused the newspaper, which supplies indispensable daily information, he leaps into the cycle saddle after his work, and rides out into the country through highways and lanes to enjoy the reposing sight of green fields, and inhale the healthy air of fresh breezes. Or, if the weather be too unpropitious to allow this invigorating pastime, he reluctantly sits at home and indulges, rather against his inclination, in desultory reading of the lightest sort. This goes far to explain the extraordinary number of beautiful Magazines which flourish at the present day. These publications, got up as

they necessarily are, regardless of expense, offer the ordinary reader precisely what he wants—short stories of a more or less sensational character, enlivened almost at every page by pictures which make the text exceedingly attractive. The publishers, alive to the change that has taken place of late years, were not slow in understanding that, in order to 'bait' the subscriber and 'land him,' it was imperative to draw his eye and his mind in an equal degree, and they supplied him with the only nourishment which could satisfy his sluggish mental appetite. And the food presented to him is, in consequence, often 'gruel and treacle,' fit for babes, and just as often 'pickles and spice,' fit for rowdies. The writer of these pages, taking up a magazine from a railway bookstall not long ago, was not a little astonished to count twelve ghost and spirit stories out of the fourteen which made up the number. Magazine tales are by no means always of this description, it is true. Many are tales of adventures and war; many are tales of love; some are good studies of life, well-thought-out and elegantly written, and some are idyllic or romantic tales of fiction, delightfully told; but a great number — too many— are blood-curdling, 'dagger-and-poison' stories, written with the view of depicting base instincts and unfolding hideous crimes — the only object being, apparently, to arouse no nobler sensation than morbid curiosity

or feverish terror. Under such circumstances it has appeared to us that there was plenty of room for a wholesome work, which, satisfying the desultory reader by its varied topics and abundant illustrations, and conveying to him subject-matter interesting enough to rivet his attention and tickle his fancy, would, at the same time, now and then stir up his heart, light up his imagination, awaken his thought, furnish his mind, lift him up 'above mortal clay,' if only for a moment, and inspire him, perhaps, with noble aspirations. Hence this book—a mere collection of *anas*, some original, some culled from the past and the present, from all countries and people; a book recording rapidly, for the benefit of 'readers in a hurry,' the wit, or wisdom, or folly of ages.

'Very old-fashioned!' 'Not up-to-date!' some fast young sparks may exclaim. To this we reply that the 'up-to-date' firework is essentially ephemeral. To-morrow cares not for Yesterday's pun. But a more forcible answer by far is, that what is good is long-lived and never old-fashioned; that *anas*, besides, have a great advantage over *tales*, inasmuch as, being easily remembered and easily told, they supply us with means of enlivening our homely talk, convivial meetings and postprandial conversation. For this reason *anas* will live for ever, and if told *à propos* seem for ever fresh.

Is this publication a bold or an idle venture

on our part—considering that extensive readers are as well acquainted as we are ourselves with what we reproduce? We think it is a common-sense one. For if those who know think this a book of oft-told tales, it will certainly appear to many people of our generation a storehouse well worth exploring, containing, as it does, rich and rare gems radiant with ennobling light, or curious and quaint oddities evoking mirthful smiles. We are well aware that books of anecdotes are numerous. But as the charm of an anecdote depends very much upon the manner of telling it, many anecdotal collections are spoilt by the abruptness with which the stories are presented. Compilers of *anas*, fancying that, in order to please the public, it was sufficient to give the pith of a tale, have generally neglected to 'frame' their picture with those local-colour details which would enable the reader to realise the situation to the full. They give him a bare bone and they are surprised he does not enjoy it; they wonder how it is that a heap of bare bones does not delight him; they marvel that, after a few pages of bare *anas*, the reader puts their book aside and opens it no more. The result could hardly be different. The *anas* soon pall because they are too dry. The bone, full of marrow though it be, is not surrounded with muscles; it has no loveliness of form; it has no variety of complexion, and it is thrown away. We have seen this so often that

we have made every endeavour to avoid the error of judgment just described. We have, therefore, in most cases, by way of preparing one to 'realise the situation,' prefaced each anecdote by a description, or exposition, or sketch, or disquisition, or essay—all of them of the slightest possible kind indeed, but sufficient, we think, to enable all sorts and conditions of readers to see and apprehend in its full light either the conversational sally, the striking thought, the lofty sentiment, the heroic saying or the comical absurdity it was intended to recall. Set forth in this novel form, we think the collection we now offer readers will afford them matter for amusement, information, and perhaps meditation. Our stock is mostly public property—'old wine in new bottles'—and if we are not mistaken it will be palatable to everyone—to the young and the old, of whatever sex and station.

Should this light work meet with success, it is our intention to make it the first of a series, and bring out several volumes under the same title.

J. V. M.

October 1896.

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1

THE CAPTAIN OF MUSKETEERS

In the reign of Louis XIII.—during the government of Cardinal de Richelieu, the greatest statesman of the seventeenth century, who founded the Great Monarchy, reduced the powerful nobles to obedience, and prepared the Age of Louis XIV.—there was once a dangerous riot in the St Paul ward of Paris. The Cardinal at once sent a company of Musketeers to restore order, and as he generally gave very precise instructions himself to his agents, he recommended the captain to use tact, and, if possible, to avoid bloodshed.

The Musketeers were, as the reader may recollect, the King's bodyguard; everyone of them was a nobleman by birth, and, private Musketeer though he was, held officer's rank in the standing army. It was an honour to fight them, a favour to approach them, a delight to see them. The gallant horsemen went off as they were ordered, rode proudly through the busy streets

of Paris, and arrived at the Place Royale, which was the centre of the disturbance. The Musketeers, by their sudden appearance, caused a lull in the tumult and a partial hush in the uproar, not unalloyed with emotion and fear. The elegant captain, after stopping his squadron, advanced some few paces in front, removed his hat and saluted the people with the most smiling courtesy—an unexpected act, which had the effect of hushing the clamour. Then the captain, bowing a second time, addressed the multitude in a clear, ringing voice,—

'Gentlemen,' said he, 'I have had orders to shoot down mischievous vagabonds, low scoundrels and lawless ruffians only; before we fire, therefore, let every honest man retire.'

In the twinkling of an eye the extensive square was empty, the crowd hastening away by every thoroughfare leading from it, everyone in the rabble wishing to give the Musketeers the impression that he was a member of the gentry at least.

When the Musketeers returned, the Cardinal reported what had taken place to the King. The Prince, who was of a melancholy disposition, seldom indulged in mirth. So cheerless did he consider life that he never appeared to take the least pleasure in those amusements which afford keen enjoyment to most men, and he expected his favourites to share his despondency at all times. Once he took one of his friends aside, and said, with a sad smile, 'Come to this window with me and let us be weary together.'

When he heard the Cardinal's report, however, the clever feat of his beloved Musketeers so delighted him, and the easy rout of the rioters so tickled his fancy, that for once he burst out laughing merrily, then sent for the captain, and giving him a purse for his company, said, 'You see, sir, that in all things wit is better than force'—a suitable speech, and the only pretty thing Louis XIII. ever said.

11

INDIAN WOMEN'S SHREWDNESS

BEFORE the abolition of Suttee in India (1834?), widows thought that they were obliged to immolate themselves on the funeral pile of their husbands. Suttee was optional; but to satisfy public opinion, and gain the reputation of an exemplary relict, or, frequently, to indulge in a mere inclination to vanity, most well-to-do widows underwent the sacrifice and suffered a cruel death. A pretty young widow, on the morning of the fearful rite, was lamenting her fate, sobbing her heart out, and shedding sorrowful tears; but no one knew whether her intense grief was due to the dread of the stake or the loss of her lord. A good Brahmin, who came to prepare her for the ceremony, said to her, with unction, 'Don't cry, dear child, you are going straightway into happiness.'

'Pardon me, Father,' replied the pretty widow between her sobs, 'but I do not see it.'

'My dear, you are going to be united again to your husband.'

'United to him again?'

'Yes, indeed. Within a few hours you shall see him once more, and for ever!'

'Is it really true, Father?'

'As true as you now see me.'

'I can hardly believe it!'

'Nothing, however, is more certain, my child.'

'Is there then no doubt at all about it?' inquired the pretty widow again, lifting up her lustrous, tearful eyes, lighted this time with a faint gleam of hope.

'Is there no doubt at all about it?' she repeated.

'Doubt? No; absolutely none! You shall see him again.'

'Oh! then,' she burst out, with rapture, as if a charm had been suddenly cast upon her, 'in that case I don't burn myself alive, if you please.'

And quickly drying up her tears she bowed the Brahmin out of the house with ecstatic smiles. The holy man wondered whether the delight she showed came from her escaping the fire ordeal, or escaping the embrace of the departed one. On this point, too, the neighbours were divided; but the shrewdest suspected that both escapes had an equal share in causing her extraordinary joy.

As to the pretty widow, she lived a long life of quiet and happiness, without ever showing the least impatience to have the realisation of her eternal bliss hastened.

The above story is probably a make-up, to show that in India itself, where women are held in pitiable subjection, there are some who are shrewd enough to take good care of themselves, and this fact is shown better

still in an Hindustani tale, of which we may give an abridged version:—

A poet, in one of the Moslem kingdoms in India, was—like many poets elsewhere—exceedingly poor. To better his condition he vainly endeavoured to be heard at Court where he knew that minstrels, singers and extempore poets, attached to the person of his sovereign, led, if not a wealthy, at least a quiet and happy life. Wandering from one village to another might give him sustenance and garments, but it was a precarious existence at best, and he resolved to carry out a plan he ingeniously devised to approach his Prince, and obtain an honourable pittance such as his brother poets were enjoying in the King's retinue. He made himself acquainted with the customs of the palace, and soon learnt that if he could come into contact with the chief gatekeeper, he might have a chance of making himself heard by some of the courtiers, and possibly by the Sultan himself. He also heard that the gatekeeper had a beautiful marriageable daughter, and he thought that, if he could only speak to her, he might touch her heart, and, through her, succeed in forwarding his purpose. With a view to see her, he managed to scale the wall of the palace garden, and, hiding among the shrubs, he watched the keeper's lodge. After a few hours he was rewarded for his patience, for he saw the handsome girl coming out of her father's house, with a pitcher, for the purpose, no doubt, of fetching fresh water from the clear stream that ran through the grounds.

She chanced, happily for him, to take a path which lay close to the shrubbery that concealed him, and, as she passed by, he began reciting as melodiously as he could, a piece of his composition in honour of a lovely maiden. The girl listened, and then stopped.

'Who is there,' she said, 'telling a tale of love?'

The poet showed himself, and saluting the maiden, he extemporised a few stanzas addressed to herself, in which he conveyed an ardent wish to renew his happiness of seeing her again. She graciously assented to hear him next day at the same hour and in the same way. After a few days he formulated his desire to speak to her father in order to carry out his ambitious scheme.

'I will manage an interview,' she said, 'if you will swear by Allah and his Prophet and the Koran, that you will marry me. Not that my father will easily consent to bestow my hand on a poor minstrel, for he has other views—distasteful to me; but he is so fond of me that, if you are patient, I shall in time obtain his acquiescence.'

He took the oath required of him. The girl then gave him directions as to the mode of proceeding, in accordance with which he presented himself to the dreaded doorkeeper at a certain hour next day. The doorkeeper, before hearing a word, made a sign to the guards to have him ejected, when the girl, who was on the watch, suddenly appeared on the scene, and caressingly asked him to let the man speak. The father roughly inquired of him what he wanted. Then the poet begged of him to use his influence in his behalf.

'I am poor,' he said. 'I am starving. I am a poet. I have composed a poem of great beauty, and if I only could recite it to the Sultan my fortune would be as good as made.'

At all this—which was told very rapidly—the doorkeeper flew into a rage. Fancy the impudence of a vagabond, who presumed to be introduced into the palace and see the Sultan!

But again the girl interposed, and merely said, 'Why not, father dear?'

'Never,' he loudly ejaculated, 'shall I be guilty of

such a breach of duty! The palace is sacred ground; and I am here to guard it from being polluted by the presence of beggars and vagrants.'

'Sir,' expostulated the poet, 'Heaven would reward you for befriending a poor poet—was not the Prophet a poet, too? And not Heaven only would repay you, but, I myself would also reward you by a substantial gift if I succeeded.'

Upon this the doorkeeper softened down somewhat, and, after sending his daughter away, so as not to appear too greedy before her, he gradually assented. But he imposed the condition that, after his audience with the Sultan, the poet would give him, not half, but three-fourths of whatever the Prince might bestow as a gift. It was agreed; and in due course the poet, by the assistance of some officers, was smuggled into the audience chamber, where other people were paying their court to the Sultan.

His Highness, as it happened, was rather cross on that day, and having eyed the new-comer, he commanded him to speak.

The poet obeyed, with a beating heart; and in a stanza which cleverly opened his verses, told the Prince the happiness and pride he felt at beholding one of the holy descendants of the Prophet, and begged to be allowed to recite a poem of his own.

A nod of assent permitted him to proceed. When the poem was over, the Sultan expressed the desire to reward the reciter as he deserved.

'And may it please Your Highness,' asked a chamberlain, 'what shall he have?'

'One hundred strokes of the bastinado,' replied the Sultan, 'and let him have them here at once. That will make him sing in a key that may divert us more than his musical verses.'

The poet knelt down submissively, and the operation began without his uttering a groan. When he had

counted twenty-five strokes, he shouted, 'In Allah's holy name, stop, and hear my petition!'

At the sacred name of Allah—which at once stays any kind of proceeding among the Moslems—they paused, and the Sultan asked, 'What is thy petition?'

'Your Highness, I have a partner in this business, and it is only just I should not rob him of his share.'

'What meanest thou? Explain this matter quickly.'

The poet briefly related the agreement he had been compelled to make.

The Sultan, much amused at the episode, said, 'Justice is justice, let the gatekeeper be fetched.'

When this official arrived, full of greedy expectations, he was not a little surprised to get more than he had bargained for. When he had got his share on his back, and had been carried home, the Sultan said to the poet,—

'Thou shalt now be rewarded for thy fortitude and ingenuity, first with a hundred pieces of silver, and then with a place among my minstrels.'

'May it please Your Highness, how shall your humble servant make his peace with the gatekeeper?'

'He shall be ordered to forget and forgive.'

'A plan Your Highness's humble servant would prefer, as safer and more gratifying, would be to compel me to marry his daughter.'

'That thou shalt do if she agrees.'

'She does, Your Highness. I have her word for it.'

'Then thou shalt take to her five hundred pieces of silver as a dowry, for we like thee for thy wits, which have cured us of melancholy to-day.'

Thus did the poet accomplish his vow to marry the maiden, and the beautiful maiden accomplish her desire to marry the man of her choice.

III

PADDY TAKES THE CAKE

LOVE for our native land is the most unwavering feeling which animates us. We front dangers, we face death itself, we cheerfully sacrifice our lives in defence of our country, and, as a corollary to our devotion to it, we naturally extol it to the skies, and deny that other people are entitled to speak of the richness of their soil, the beauty of their climate, and the loveliness of their scenery with that legitimate pride which we feel for our own. And this prepossession is necessarily more engrained in the stay-at-home population than in those who have travelled.

In the smoking-parlour of a temperance inn in the Highlands, a mixed party of Scotchmen, Englishmen, Welshmen and Irishmen were arguing about their respective greatness and countries. A Scotchman after laying down that England had been annexed by the Scots under James I., wound up by boasting of the scenery of Scotland. 'Look at our lakes and mountains—where can you match them?'

'You are fine fellows to talk like this,' a Welshman

shouted. 'It is no use recalling that England is chiefly inhabited by the Welsh—that is, descendants of the ancient Britons, among whom there is a sprinkling of Romans, Dutchmen, Danes, Anglo-Saxons and Frenchmen —for you would deny it; but as to scenery, if we have no large lakes, we have hills and mountains enough to sell to Scotland, if she had money enough to pay for them,'

The Irish laughed merrily at the ignorance of the Scotch and Welsh when speaking of national greatness and scenery. Had not the Irish been the backbone of England in war on the land and on the sea? Had they not given her splendid soldiers and commanders, without whom Great Britain would now be nowhere?

And as regards scenery, Ireland has every kind—hills, valleys, glades, glens, caverns, grottoes, caves, woods, lakes, eternal verdure—all of which make it the most romantic land in the world, and this is so well acknowledged that she is called "The Emerald Isle."

'England, then,' eagerly replied an Englishman, 'is no country at all! You are cool, all of you, and no mistake! Have not we English made you all our humble subjects and servants? Have we not peopled America? Have we not spread all the world over, built the greatest empire history can record, made our language the universal tongue of commerce and civilisation, and organised the most workable of the political systems ever tried?'

'And if we condescend to speak of scenery,' continued he, 'why, look at our beautiful rivers, our lovely lawns, our grand New Forest, our undulating hills and downs, and our natural harbours! The fact is, you are nothing at all as compared with ourselves.'

'Get along with you and your tall talk,' the Scotchman retorted. 'Why, we made you what you are. Where would you be without us? We can beat you in things great and small. Where, outside Scotland, will you find

an echo such as we have, which magnifies the voice of the speaker like thunder?'

'Oh, as to that, there is an echo in Wales,' a Welshman replied, 'that does not only increase the loudness of the voice, but will also give back six distinct times what has been shouted to it.'

'That is as common as blackberries in England! I know of two,' said an Englishman, 'that repeat eight or nine times.'

'Then that is nothing to one I know in Ireland,' rejoined an amiable Hibernian.

'Where?'

'Why at Killarney.'

'Blarney, you mean?'

'No, Killarney. I would not tell you an untruth to save my soul.'

'Well, what is it like?'

'You all speak of a common thing. Your echoes repeat what you say and nothing more; but the one I speak of replies to you. If you shout "Well, Paddy, how are you?" it answers, "Pretty well, thank you."'

A good-humoured roar met this boast.

'No wonder Ireland is called "The Emerald Isle," shouted an Englishman.

'How so?' inquired the son of Saint Patrick.

'Why, because it is inhabited by green people.'

'You seem to doubt it?' Pat said.

'Not at all; I believe it, and so do you, don't you, gentlemen?' shouted the Englishman.

'We do, indeed!' was the loud reply.

And as there was at last general agreement, the friends parted, each claiming the victory

IV

HAMAN AND MORDECAI

In matter of ingenuity and invention we are very fond of imagining that we excel our ancestors by far. We certainly do in many spheres. It is, however, by no means certain that we surpass them in originality and wit, however superior we may be in our smart modes of expression. When we consider that the majority of our fables, fairy tales, and many of our stories of adventure can be traced to the East; that Europe merely dressed them up in a new garb, when, after the Crusades they began to spread in the West, we are bound to own that the question of pre-eminence might, after all, be decided in favour of our forefathers. Italy, at all events—in this as in all else—preceded all the other European countries, as soon as

imagination awoke from its long, mediæval sleep. The following is upwards of five hundred years old.

In Florence, a little street beggar was in the habit of daily repairing to a certain busy street at mid-day, when the eating-shops and inns were full of customers. He had cleverly remarked that his bread crusts were far more enjoyable if they were savoured by the rich fumes which escaped in whiffs from the full, blazing kitchen of a particular general roaster. This house was the best frequented of all the eating establishments in the street. So, in order to make a meal worth having, the poor little mendicant came opposite the roaster's shop, and there—envying the busy scullions and cooks going to and fro, looking at the hams, ducks and chickens adorning the entrance, viewing the geese and turkeys revolving on their spits before a glorious fire, inhaling the delicious vapours floating out of the elysian hostel—he munched his bread with keen relish.

The master roaster had seen him many a time, and many a time had looked at him askance. The little street beggar was an eyesore, which, just at the busy time, defaced the splendid show of his model roasting-house. Customers poured in, certainly—scores of them. Each day added to his savings. He was already rich enough to retire. But still this beggar boy spoilt his pride—in time, almost his sleep—and day by day aroused his ill-temper, just as the presence of Mordecai at the king's palace gate angered the wicked Haman.

At length the nuisance was too great for him, and, one day, unable to control his wrath, he rushed out of the shop, determined to put an end to the poor boy's persistent visits.

'Now then, boy,' he shouted threateningly, 'give me twopence for that smoke of mine thou stealest every day. Out with the money at once.'

'I have none,' replied the little one, in a tremble.

'Out with it, quickly,' roared the great cook, 'or to prison thou goest.'

'Pardon me, master,' whined the poor wretch, and he began to cry.

From the first appearance of the master cook, the passers-by had begun to stop, and in a few seconds there was a ring of loiterers around the two disputants. By the time the boy cried, there was quite a crowd.

A gentleman, now arriving, asked the irate cook what the disturbance was about; and being told, with due Italian volubility, he said to the boy, 'That is only right, little man, thou must pay.'

'I have no *danari*,' the boy sobbed out.

'Well then, I will pay for thee.' And, taking twopence out of his purse, the gentleman dropped them on the pavement, picked them up, and said to the great cook, 'You are paid.'

'How so—paid?' quickly asked the roaster.

'As you have fed the boy,' replied the gentleman, 'with the smoke of your joints, he pays you with the ring of his coin. The one is as good and pleasant as the other.'

Sudden shouts of laughter at once discomfited the fiery cook, and he was only too glad to sneak back to his turning-spits.

The gentleman, meanwhile, gave some silver to the little man, an example which was followed with gladness by the witnesses of the scene.

'It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good.'

V

TRUTH AT COURT

THE sensitiveness of writers was just as proverbial in olden as in modern days, and the higher the rank of the poet, the more intense was his touchiness and irritability. Did not Richelieu, great man as he was, feel very angry with the public because his tragedies were not appreciated? Did he not descend to petty jealousy against Corneille because the latter's immortal plays were greeted with universal applause?

If there ever was a prince free from prejudices and gifted with rare common sense, that was Frederick the Great. His soundness of judgment and sense of discrimination were almost unique. He admired intellect and wit to such a degree that he never rested until

Voltaire had consented to go to Prussia and live in close friendship with him. The intimacy seemed absolute and unshakable. The rock on which it split asunder was literary vanity. Voltaire dared speak his mind about his royal friend's verses, and the royal friend at once shuffled off the ordinary mortal's garb to don again his robe of regal authority. Voltaire fled; but his bosom friend soon showed him that a king is a stronger man than a poet, and a sceptre a longer and more effective weapon than a sharp quill, for Voltaire was arrested, and thought himself lucky not to be shut up in a fortress for life! But even a Frederick must yield the palm of literary resentment to another prince.

Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse prided himself upon his poetical compositions, and was conceited enough to believe himself equal to the best poets. On one occasion he showed that his vanity would not bear much criticism. Having recited some of his verses to Polyxenes, he pressed this philosopher to tell him what he thought of his production.

'What good will my opinion do to you?' said Polyxenes.

'I wish to experience all the emotions of an author,' replied the king; 'and I will, if necessary, *order* you to tell me what impression my verses make upon you.'

'Well, then,' asked Polyxenes, 'am I to speak as one ought to speak to the master of many legions or to a poet?'

'In this matter speak as you would to your equal,' Dionysius replied.

'In that case I cannot help acknowledging your poetry to be of the feeblest kind.'

'The feeblest kind!' exclaimed the tyrant. 'What do you mean?'

'I mean,' replied the other, 'that you can arrange soldiers in line of battle better than words in poetical array.'

'Well, then, if this be your idea,' said the king, 'it is plain you have yet to learn what taste and politeness are like, Polyxenes. Do me the pleasure to repair to the marble quarries to qualify yourself in both.'

The philosopher went away with equanimity and worked in the quarries.

Dionysius, about a year afterwards, recollected him and had him reinstated in his former position. Wishing to see how far his lesson had taken effect, the tyrant one day at dinner recited a new piece of verse of his own, and asked all the guests their personal opinion as to the beauty of his creation 'Exquisite!' said one. 'Very beautiful indeed!' said another. 'Never was there anything like it!' said a third. And so it went round—the sycophants praising the royal author with their usual servility.

When Polyxenes's turn came, he got up from his couch and quietly walked towards the door.

'Polyxenes, where are you going to?' cried Dionysius,

'To the quarries,' answered the candid critic.

VI

POET AND PASTRY-COOK

'QUICKLY throbbed her pulse. Was she to be disappointed? She tried to be more composed, but her emotion was too violent. Hopes and fears flitted through her heart. Doubt was her torment. . . . The train steamed in. She trembled. People poured out of the cars . . . and she saw him not. Had he broken his promise? A tear quivered on her eyelid. Then, like lightning, a sudden joy illumined her lovely countenance; and though the crowd was too dense to recognise a face afar off in the bustling throng, long before she could see his features: "It is he!" she cried in ecstacy. "There is the elegant and glossy two-dollar Broadway hat he got at Maguire's!"'

An advertisement of this kind can be daily read in American newspapers. Puffing has become one of the fine arts. The draughtsman is called into requisition to display his inventive imagination by the side of the sensational penman — and their composite production stares us in the face on walls, boards and newspaper broad sheets. Competition has developed this means of success as it has developed everything else. Until the present century advertising remained very primitive. A shop attracted customers in bygone days by some striking

curiosity exhibited at the window, or in an inner room, such as a young tame bear going up a ladder, a cat trained to wind up wool, a chameleon climbing up a string. When the bear, cat or chameleon died a painted board or sign represented it outside. The shopkeepers who had no such allurements to bait the unwary were content to walk up and down outside their shop frontage, and to shout the names and prices of their wares. Smaller traders were, as they are still, obliged to hawk and cart about their goods with the accompaniment of deafening cries. Some of the London cries were very quaint and very curious. The more genteel sort of tradespeople, as early as two hundred and fifty years ago, endeavoured to entice purchasers by refined devices. They would pay a versifier to compose a piece of poetry or a song, extolling the excellence and cheapness of their merchandise, and they distributed the composition gratis — a style of advertising which still flourishes amongst us. Sometimes a versifier, in order to find employment for his genius composed a poem for nothing, being certain that the shopkeeper he praised would at least make him a present. This mode of puffing was originated by a poetaster, who like many inventors, had the mortification to see around him highly successful imitators, while he himself reaped nothing for his ingenuity but mockery and starvation. Such is the caprice of fortune.

This rhymster had written some high-flown stanzas in praise of a celebrated confectioner's patties, as an allurement to other pastry-cooks to bribe his muse. Unfortunately, however, the verses were read by no living soul except the eulogised patty-maker himself, who, in his enthusiasm, bought all the copies. After a while, when his vanity had been fully gratified by daily perusal of the poetry in his honour, the idea struck him that he might make some use of the printed leaves by laying his patties upon them.

A bright thought, indeed; for, besides his money not

being entirely lost, some customer might chance to glance at the madrigals and see *his name* in print. It happened, however, that the first person who remarked the poetical elucubrations thus applied was the versifier himself. He entered the shop and indignantly exclaimed, 'Your patties are on my verses!'

'Yes,' said the confectioner, 'just as your verses were on my patties; and I am sure we shall all be gainers, for that is the only way your poetry will sell.'

VII

BLUE BEARD AND THE PRINCESS

If Henry VIII. was the prototype of Blue Beard, as Perrault himself allowed it to be believed, it must be owned that the hero of the tale conveys a pretty good idea of the original. Blue Beard's pride and fierce demeanour, his freezing commands and consciousness of brute force, his cold cruelty and savage look, impress the young reader with the terror of a power from which there is no earthly escape. It is felt that unless Heaven itself intervenes between the tyrant and his victims, his order and their doom must follow as night follows day. His castle is strong enough to defy an army. His frown terrifies ordinary mortals. A wife appears as a feather in his hand, and as defenceless and quivering in his grasp as a linnet in the talons of a falcon. And so it was with Bluff King Hal, a nickname which suggests something human, and colours its owner with a false tinge of romance —in reality, the synonym of Ogre. In his fortified despotism, as Blue Beard in his fortress, he could defy

a nation and deal in wholesale murder. Louis XI., by his side, seems a gentle prince who hangs and decapitates in self-defence. The Ogre holds nothing sacred. He knows no divine or human laws. His wayward passion and caprice he gratifies at all costs — whether it involves the subversion of a creed with the death of fifty thousand of his subjects, or the violation of marriage vows with the divorce of a virtuous queen, or the murder of another. The rope, the stake, the axe are his means of satisfying his passions. Richard III. was not such a scourge.

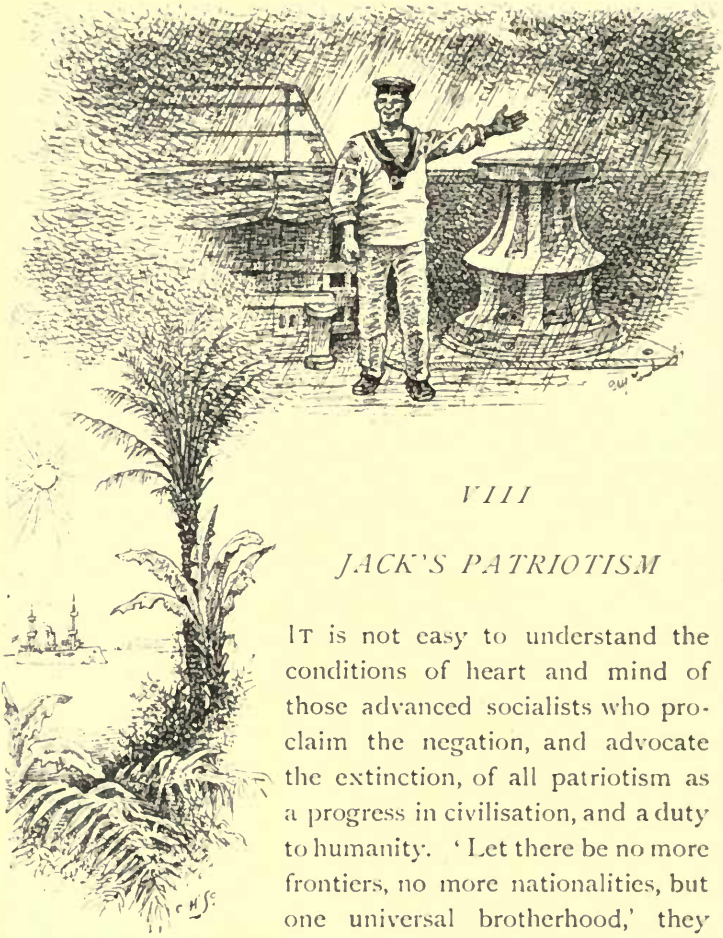
It is with a feeling of delight that we find, for once, his craving frustrated, and the manner in which it was disappointed adds much to our pleasure.

After the execution of Catherine Howard, which followed that of Anne Boleyn within a few years, Henry VIII. saw the splendid portrait of the Princess of Parma, by Titian, and he was so much struck with the beauty of that princess that he determined to marry her. The picture which was sufficient to inspire him with love is not known to us; but those who have seen the portraits of Caterina Cornaro and Della Bella can easily imagine the loveliness of a painting that had the power to captivate the English King, who certainly was a good judge of beauty. Titian had the genius to transfer to his canvas the liquid beam of the eyes, the smiling sweetness of the lips, the richness of round forms, the warmth of living and palpitating flesh, the enchanting grace of attitude, that could enhance the charm of a handsome and pretty woman; and Henry VIII. fell in love once more. For the purpose of making an offer of marriage he sent to Italy a special ambassador, who acquitted himself of his mission with diplomatic tact and zeal, expecting great favours from the King if he was successful.

The Princess received the envoy with exquisite grace; but when he had delivered his delicate message

she said to him, with the most affable smile, 'My lord, you will convey my sincere thanks to His Majesty the King of England, Defender of the Faith, and you will tell him that if I had two heads I should most gratefully lay one at his feet; but having one only, he must not think me selfish if I keep it for myself.'

The beginning of the speech had so elated the envoy that he could hardly contain himself, but within a few seconds the joy that shone in his countenance made room for the gravest expression that bitter disappointment could depict. We may be pretty sure that the ambassador returned home rather crestfallen, and garbled the reply he had to give so as to spare his master's feelings and save his own head from the Ogre's anger. For once Blue Beard did not get his own way, and was laughed at for his pains.



VIII

JACK'S PATRIOTISM

It is not easy to understand the conditions of heart and mind of those advanced socialists who proclaim the negation, and advocate the extinction, of all patriotism as a progress in civilisation, and a duty to humanity. 'Let there be no more frontiers, no more nationalities, but one universal brotherhood,' they say. It may be that we shall in time become so perfect and unselfish, so fraternal and loving, that there will be no longer any rivalry among nations; there will be emulation only for the common good. But we are very far from that dreamland; for how many centuries would it not take to obliterate what we now consider natural feelings? How are people, speaking different languages, and having different modes of thinking, brought up in various religious creeds, living under multiform institutions, viewing everything from diverse standpoints, to arrive at uni-

formity of thought and sentiment, is more than we can imagine. We might, we likely shall, have in time the United States of Europe, but such a political federation would not extinguish patriotism; it would only extend its area and probably deepen its intensity. Universal brotherhood is an irrealisable dream. What number of revolutions — political, military, social, religious, nay scientific—will there not be before we establish equality an amiable Utopia; before we regard competition, that powerful spring of progress, as an evil; before obligatory education is everywhere the same, and produces men and women of level mediocrity; before, in short, individuality of character, which hitherto has promoted the welfare of our race, has been made impossible and has disappeared. We see what want of individuality can do for a nation by looking at the Chinese—stagnation, corruption, effeteness are the results. And even *they* cherish their own country, their own people, their own institutions.

But when a man tells us that patriotism is a sign of retrograde imbecility, has not that man left his native town or country, and felt uneasy feelings on finding himself in the midst of strangers, speaking an unknown tongue and having odd customs?

And when he returned home, did he not feel a pleasure at seeing faces whose type was familiar to him? a delight on perceiving the old roofs, the fields, the orchards, where he spent his childhood? a thrill at hearing his mother tongue again? a quiver of emotion at hearing a national air? and a tear of joy at hearing a national song? Let the socialist speak on the platform ever so much, he, too, knows that blood is thicker than water. But we must not be too solemn. Patriotism may also verge upon the ludicrous; yet, even then, we cannot help admiring it.

A man-of-war had been cruising in the Mediterranean for three years. During that time she had repeatedly sailed in the lovely blue sea, under a spotless heaven, in

and out of the Greek Archipelago. The isles of that enchanting region had shown those curving shores and undulating lines which had inspired poets for ages. The dawn, the sunset, had clothed the amphitheatre of remote slopes in robes of iridescent hues spangled with shots of gold. The milky-azure sky tinged with pink; the distant peaks sparkling like so many carbuncles and topazes; ranges bathed in dazzling roseate tints, glazed with silver, crossed with opal reflections and ruby transparences, had often produced prodigious effects which no painting or description ever approached. Towards night, the eye had oft and again seen the lower slopes melting into deep grey, and successively disappearing, while the sunlight, leaping from crest to crest, so as to escape the gloom which was drowning everything in its sombre waves, crowned with a silver diadem the last sparkling range. Those sights, that ever-changing panorama mantled in vivid splendour, the British crew had seen for three years when the ship was ordered home to take some new guns on board.

The sailors, naturally, were not a little pleased to return to their native shores after their long absence and their somewhat monotonous life. The ship entered the Thames on a typical November morning. The weather was rather heavy. The half-gale, which was blowing was dashing the sea against the hull, and now and then sending a sheet of spray over the ship, while the rain, driven obliquely by the sharp gusts of wind and accompanied by hail, made the deck a most unenviable station. A cold mist, which might at any moment turn day into night, completed the November picture.

A patriotic Jack-Tar, recognising by these characteristic signs his beloved native land, so superior to foreign countries, was so elated to breathe the congenial air, that he shouted, in his uncontrollable delight, 'Ha! this is the weather! None of your blue skies here!'

In his exclamation the good fellow revealed his love

for his country and his contempt for the rest of the universe.

It has often been remarked that people are generally indifferent to those beauties of nature which are familiar to them. Few days in the year pass away without a new display of unrivalled magnificence at sunrise and at sunset; and yet people can travel from America to the Rigi to witness a rise of the sun, who pay no attention to a like phenomenon at home. If this be true of many educated people, it is far more true of the lower classes. A rustic or an artisan never condescends to look at such a common thing as the sun. Once the writer of these pages was returning home in the evening, when he saw a sunset of marvellous grandeur. It lasted nearly an hour. The greatest effect painted by Turner can give only a faint, I had almost said a dull, idea of that sublime view. Most gorgeous clouds were stretched out in the western horizon, and masses of woolly clouds, in detached groups, covered the whole sky to the east, The sun, like a divine fan, shooting its golden beams through the intervals, displayed an inconceivable spectacle. From the most intense crimson to the most translucid sapphire, through every tone of warmth, ideal colours and forms rivetted the eye, stirred the imagination and moved the heart. Limpid, rosy mountains of vapours, shaded with lilac; purple undulations, fringed with silvery and golden trains of lace; pearl-grey fleeces, touched up with orange; glacier-like heights of glittering whiteness, traversed at their base by rich flaming streaks, and higher up by phosphorescent cloudlets, presented in its whole majesty the harmonious pomp of the heavens. The glowing and blushing ocean reflected the loveliness of which we are giving a feeble sketch.

Along the sea shore, crowded with promenaders, I did not see a person turning round to look at the indescribable scene. Desirous of sharing my admiration with

some one, I stopped close to a bronzed fisherman, leaning on his arms over the parapet lining the cliff, and vacantly musing.

'Here is a sky for you!' said I to him. 'Did you ever see anything more beautiful?'

He turned his head to the west for a second, and said in a gruff voice,—

'Rain to-morrow!' after which he resumed his former attitude. That was his way of looking at the glories of creation.

IX

THE HERO KING AND HIS DOGS

THE philanthropist, longing as he does for an ideal humanity, deprecates warlike spirit and hates war. Yet, when he remembers that without force nothing great could ever have been, or ever was, founded; when he reflects that the survival of the fittest nations and the progress of civilisation have been secured by force, he must arrive at the conclusion that, so long as barbarism in any form exists in the world, war is a necessary evil. We may love peace as the first of all blessings. But, if an uncivilised nation attacks us, we must be able to repel it; and war, though we detest it, must be our ultimate resource. We have no choice, when it is forced upon us. Very remote, therefore, is the desired Millennium. This being an undeniable truth, warlike

spirit is not an unmixed evil; it is rather an indispensable good.

And what is an army if not a nation within a nation? At once the heart, the buckler and the glory of a people, it constitutes its living and movable frontier. If the army is expensive and deprives a country of laborious hands for the cultivation of its fields, it compensates the nation for the loss of production by the acquisition of new qualities. It not only tempers, but often regenerates, the national character. Love of arms and military enthusiasm exclude selfish passions. The soldier practises self-denial for the benefit of his fatherland and its defence against aggression. It is true that, whereas the bulk of a nation loves peace beyond all things, the army, indeed, loves war, so strong is the influence of warlike exercise. The recruit may shed tears on leaving his home, but military training soon transforms his spirit. His regiment is a new home to him—a new school—the school of public virtues, where he prepares himself for the life of a good citizen. He acquires there habits of duty and discipline, obedience and devotion, order and punctuality, endurance and fortitude. His physique is strengthened his courage becomes valour, his sense of rectitude becomes honour. If old warriors have not any longer the dash of young soldiers, they have steadiness, experience, indifference to present hardships, and teach these to their young comrades. The soldier is proud of his regiment, and the repute of his regiment is enough to excite him to deeds of bravery; the glory of the flag inspires with heroism all those who fight round its folds. If then an army is expensive and unproductive, the moral virtues which shine in its ranks are those which make a great people. And looking at the inspiring influence of its beautiful actions, we are inclined to believe that, after all, the army is the most beneficial component of a nation. For when a leader evokes

glorious names from the past, and calls upon his soldiers to emulate the deeds of their fathers, to guard their fame from being tarnished by defeat, he presents to them an ideal from which it would be disgraceful to swerve, and he compels them to maintain it, pure and undefiled, by deeds equally meritorious. What a noble heritage, then, a valiant army bequeaths to its country! With what jealousy this heritage is kept intact and is increased! What material advantage can compare with this moral greatness?

A noble chief is necessary to a noble army. A host may be small, but when led by an Alexander it conquers a world and spreads civilisation; led by a Cæsar it ends civil strife and founds an empire; led by a Napoleon, it restores order and insures the foundation of a new society; led by a Frederick, it creates a nation and prepares the restoration of an ancient power as well as the unification of a whole race.

Modern Europe has witnessed this transformation. The Great Frederick, with the small army which his inflexible father had formed, changed in a few years a nation of two-and-a-half millions of souls into one of ten millions, and raised a revenue of a little over one million sterling into one of four millions. He made modern Prussia; so that his army was the instrument both of power and of greatness. That small Prussia, again by the deeds of its army, has since become the German Empire, and the first military State in the world. And not this only, but the military system of training has given an energy to the Germanic race that the Romans themselves did not exceed. The schooling of the Prussians has not been a mild one. The iron hand of the second Prussian King turned the whole country into a camp. Men to him were so much food for cannon, which a sovereign had a right to use as, and for what, he liked. The only soldiers he valued at all were those of his select guard, and he valued them

for their high stature and the price they had cost him —each of them having been kidnapped by his recruiting agents in foreign countries. They were precious, not because of their lives, but because of the difficulty of replacing them. His son, the Great Frederick, in whom heroism and cynicism were equally blended, held the lives of his soldiers very cheap. He used them unsparingly with immense results; but, though he undoubtedly loved his army as much as he could love anything, he was very hard upon his men when they failed to achieve impossibilities.

At Kolin, probably the most sanguinary battle on record, his troops, unable to carry the enemy's position, mowed down as they were by musketry and artillery, wavered, and even showed signs of terror. The king again and again tried to rally them, but each charge only aggravated the situation. Finally, the battle was hopelessly lost. The few troops which survived the terrible execution of the enemy's fire, remained deaf to the order to advance, and ceased to hold together. Even then, Frederick would not give way, and once more endeavoured to make the soldiers face the storm. Seeing them halt and hesitate, he struck some in anger, and shouted, 'Charge! and die, if necessary! Ye dogs! do you wish to live for ever?'

But death had carried too many of their comrades, and the 'dogs,' heroic as they all were, preferred to 'run away, and live to fight another day.'

The hard words of Frederick are not pleasant reading, for us of the nineteenth century, but we have to recollect that heroic kings do not make heroic nations with velvet hands and honeyed speeches. If the means were harsh, the results were proportionately great and durable.

X

COCKNEY SPORTSMEN

'I PREFER it jugged,' he said.

'But where is the hare?' she asked.

'I will go and catch one for you,' he answered.

'Catch one?' the cook replied. 'You will have to run hard then.'

'Not at all. Don't you know hares are mad on sugar?'

'No; but what then?'

'Ha!' he answered, 'a week ago I spread moist sugar on a flat stone lying in the path of a hare which I detected. Next morning when I came I saw the hare had gobbled it up.'

'Well?'

'Well, for the last six days I have been spreading sugar on the stone, and the fool has eaten it. He must be so used to this fare by this time, that he doubtless comes at a gallop to the stone, and sets eating what is

upon it without looking or smelling, so accustomed is he to find there what he relishes, and this morning I am sure to have him.'

'But the moment he hears you, said the cook, he will be off.'

'Not at all. For last night, instead of sugar I spread snuff and pepper on the stone!'

'How silly of you!'

'Why, don't you see what is sure to have happened?'

'What?'

'Why, the idiot, early this morning, came running as usual and began to lick.'

'Well, then, I suppose he ran away?'

'Not a bit. He sneezed on the stone so tremendously that he broke his jaws and skull; and now I'll go and fetch him.'

He went, and to be sure there lay the victim of his heartless trick with his head smashed.

This is a French tale invented to delude unsportsmanlike townsmen into the belief that, without a gun or a shooting license, they can eat jugged hare whenever they feel inclined. Such a result, hunting in the course of its future evolution may possibly bring about; but we do not believe that, though man loves tobacco and contrives many a snare for birds and beasts, hares will ever become so degenerate as to take snuff.

Hunting, during the period of man's wild state, was almost the only means of procuring food. But it ceased to be a pursuit of the first importance when pastoral and agricultural life began, and in time it gradually became a pastime instead of a necessity. The hunting-field was once a stage for heroism. It is seldom so now; for, putting aside the few great sportsmen who make a name in Asia and Africa, there is not much danger attached to shooting grouse—not lions—or pursuing, not a bear, but a fox. It is no longer a sort of military apprenticeship, as it was in the Middle Ages.

The daring demanded at present is reduced to the pulling of a trigger, or to that which is displayed by a tamed hare, trained to fire a penny pistol. And as hunting has degenerated into mere pleasure, the number of sportsmen is legion. A man with a gun pays a license duty, and for three guineas is transformed into a Nimrod. In France, game is so scarce and sportsmen are so numerous, that they have been known to throw their caps in the air and fire at them by way of practising the art of shooting.

The Tartarin of Daudet is not altogether a fictitious personage. There are excellent shooters undoubtedly. One, well known to the writer of these pages, for instance, thinks nothing of bringing down a bird every time he fires, and of bagging a whole covey of thirteen birds which his dog has raised; so that he could hold his own among good sporting company anywhere. Such men, however, are relatively rare amongst our neighbours. If the French sportsmen are not first-rate shots generally, they all don first-class shooting costumes. If they bring no game home in their huge bags, they start from home with a copious lunch in them. There may be a roasted hare on the table when they return, but it was bought in the market in the morning. Sportsmen have been known to buy a couple of rabbits on their way home to show how successful they have been—tame rabbits, perhaps! One bought a hare and triumphantly showed it as an evidence of his marvellous skill. The sensation was tremendous—the animal was stuffed!

Many stories, more or less diverting, have been invented at the expense of inoffensive sportsmen.

We may remind some readers of a very ancient tale which is probably not familiar to the younger generation.

Two Cockneys went out shooting small birds, and the sport did not turn out to be of the liveliest kind. Was it that the birds were too small to be properly

aimed at? Was it that they would hop about and would not wait? Was it that they had a knack of being rather far off? Was it that the sportsmen were not first-rate shots? Possibly all this had something to do with it. They were not out in the field for nothing, for they brought down one tom-tit; but, as they both fired at the same moment at the unfortunate bird, they could not decide who had killed it, and each flattered himself that he was the better sportsman.

On their way home, they saw, not far from a large farm, a pond full of ducks. They asked a rustic who was leaning on a fence close by, if they might have a shot or two at the ducks.

'You may,' answered the man, 'but not without paying for it.'

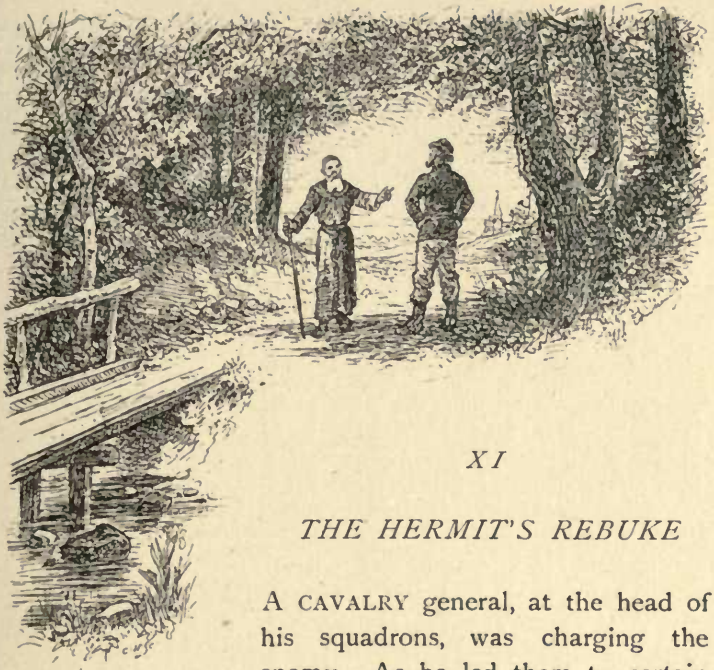
'Well, suppose we give you half-a-crown,' they said, 'may we have a shot?'

'You may, and as many as you like, only you had better give it me first.'

'All right, here it is.' And they began to fire. To their astonishment they killed one duck, then another, and nearly every shot told. When they had done, 'We've killed the lot,' they said to the man, 'not dear at the price.'

'I don't mind how many you've killed; they don't belong to me. Here is someone on horseback from the farm coming along. I should wager he will not charge you much for the ducks—perhaps two shillings a-piece.'

The sportsmen from London Town went away hurriedly, but the horseman had soon overtaken them. . . . We leave the cost of their sporting expedition to the reader's imagination.



XI

THE HERMIT'S REBUKE

A CAVALRY general, at the head of his squadrons, was charging the enemy. As he led them to certain death, so thick was the hail of fire they encountered, he felt he must himself fall. When he dashed against the wall of steel, that belched bullets and cannon balls, he sabred right and left like a brave man, closely followed by his gallant troopers; and as death must now strike him, he uttered the only prayer a man could utter, who had been nurtured in the atmosphere of doubt, which made the last decades of the last age such sad times.

'Oh God!' he cried, 'if there be a God, receive my soul, if I have a soul.'

This utterance came at least from an honest breast; and, if deplorable, it was better than downright irreverence or desperate unbelief, such as that exhibited in other instances of irreligious spirit.

All nations having recognised and acknowledged a regulating and supreme power, they have experienced the need of asking its protection for their weakness; and even when religious decay has set in, the old teach-

ing often leaves in the mind of those who no longer practise it a hazy and shadowy belief which breaks out on great occasions. That, no doubt, was the case with the cavalry officer just mentioned.

France was once proud of being called the eldest daughter of the Church, and now she might be called the native land of Scepticism, for infidelity has made there as many converts as faith sways. This profound change was brought about by simultaneous causes. But these causes had their roots in the pitiless policy of the Church, which instigated atrocious religious wars for centuries, then wholesale massacres — those of the Albigenses, the Dragonnades and the St Bartholomew— the institution of the abominable Inquisition and its hideous persecutions, whose victims can be counted by millions. How could the sincerity of the clergy be believed in, when, in the name of charity, they exterminated whole communities? And as ardent faith disappeared, the Church sought to uphold religion through greater pomp and ceremonial; and in this policy she was 'intelligent and logical,' for in proportion as belief and fervour vanished, it was necessary to strike the imagination the more. But to the hatred she had aroused by a sanguinary course, there was now added contempt for what was then taken for hypocrisy; so that disbelief grew apace and resulted in scepticism. If, however, scepticism took deep root in France, it has now spread vigorously in Germany, Italy, and even England.

'The irreligious man,' said a great moralist, 'is always a heartless man; for if he does not feel a Creator, what will he feel?'

Napoleon shared this view when he said, 'I have seen godless men at work from 1793 to 1804. These men do not deserve a government, but grapeshot.'

'Scepticism,' said another moralist, 'is one of the worst diseases that can attack the soul and the mind,

since it deprives the wretched of their last consolation, and the wicked of what might possibly prove the last barrier to their passions.'

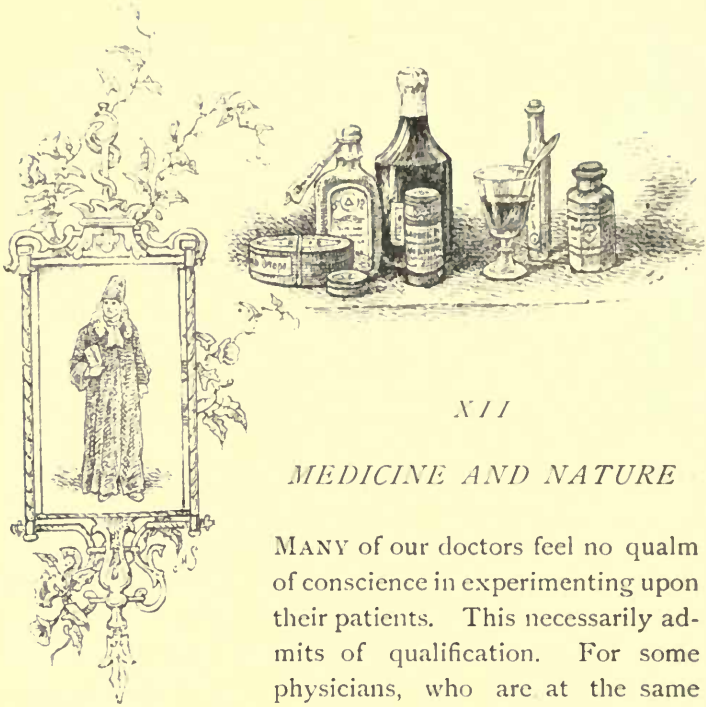
'The sceptic who wounds religious feeling by a raillery, commits an unpardonable impertinence,' said another. 'That is why religion should never be discussed in society. The world is not a suitable place for so serious a subject.'

It was a reason of this kind that caused Chamfort, himself a sceptic, to declare that 'Scoffing was at least an indiscretion.'

A man of the eighteenth century, as Chamfort was, might thus very lightly condemn that which we nowadays consider an act of folly deserving the deepest disapprobation; but the following, in its simplicity and mildness, appears to us—despite its homeliness—the tersest censure ever delivered to unbelievers.

A reckless sceptic, meeting a barefooted and hungry-looking hermit, said to him, with a sardonic smile, 'My father, if there be not another world, you are indeed in a pitiful plight.'

'It is true, my son,' replied the old man, with a severe countenance, 'but if there be one, what will be yours?'



XII

MEDICINE AND NATURE

MANY of our doctors feel no qualm of conscience in experimenting upon their patients. This necessarily admits of qualification. For some physicians, who are at the same time physiologists, in order to test the efficacy of an antidote, or, as in recent time, an antitoxin, never hesitate for a moment to run the greatest risk, and make upon themselves experiments, of which they might be the first victims. This noble devotion to science, dictated by the still nobler desire to save the lives of their fellowmen, or diminish their sufferings, is as admirable a kind of heroism as that of the sailor who leaps into the raging sea to rescue his mate, or that of the soldier who runs, under heavy fire, to fetch his wounded comrade, or rushes upon, and seizes, a smoking shell to throw it out of the entrenchments. Even among medical men of lower standing there are physicians who fearlessly ennoble their arduous profession, for some of them will make the trial of a drug more or less disagreeable upon themselves before they try it on the sick. But the generality of doctors prefer making such a trial upon others. and, human nature being what it is, we cannot

altogether blame them. Every one of us, however, has experienced the ever-ready sympathy of the modern doctor, has benefitted by his knowledge; many of the poor, above all, have found in him the kindest helper and gentlest of brothers, and all of us acknowledge his as the most beautiful profession; for, whether he be considered as a man, or the representative of an order, he is the highest specimen of humanity—the true philanthropist of our times. Former generations had not the same reasons to admire his predecessors. The Sangrado type of the leech still existed at the beginning of our century. That old-fashioned physician, who bled his patient twice a week, and made him swallow two quarts of hot water a day by way of giving fresh strength to the body, had no misgivings about the soundness of his knowledge. Provided he killed his patient according to the perennial traditions of the Faculty and the prescribed rules of his art, he was certain no reproach could be attached to him. It was clearly the patient's fault if the patient died. The lancet had surely done its utmost. Why the patient had not more blood in his body to let out; why he had not turned the nice hot water into new blood as he ought to have done, was no concern of Dr Sangrado. He had done his best, and he could bury his victim with a light conscience. Now that Sangrado himself is as dead as the Dodo, the doctors of our day arouse in us nothing but gratitude for their persons and admiration for their science.

But as they know that medical knowledge is still imperfect, that pathology is not infallible, that diagnosis is at times deceptive, that chemicals may kill as well as cure, that in many cases nature herself will act the part of the best physician, medical men half rely upon her to restore their patients to health. They endorse the apophthegm of Hippocrates: Medicine is a farce with three personages—the disease, the patient and the doctor.

The following anecdote is by no means the illustration

of a singular case; it, on the contrary, illustrates many, and shows that we may often rely on common sense and the course of nature.

A medical man, undergoing a slight illness, was saying to a friend of his that a few days hence he would, no doubt, be better. Time, he felt sure, would do away with his indisposition.

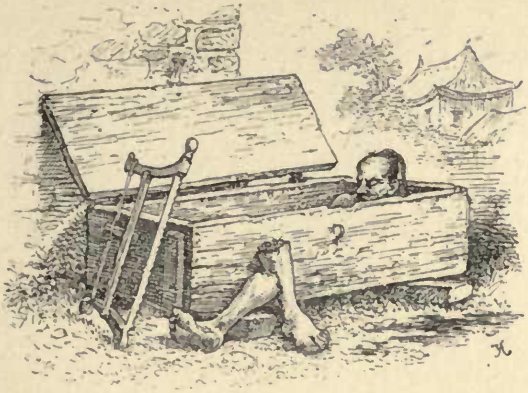
'But why,' inquired the friend, 'do you not treat yourself? Why do you not take something for it?'

'My dear fellow,' replied the doctor, 'I live by my medicines, but . . . I never take them.'

That physician would certainly have been one of Molière's friends had he lived two hundred years ago. To him could not very well have been applied the retort of a celebrated baronet. A well-known doctor, taking, doubtless, the same view of medical science as the one just mentioned, was saying once to Sir William Scott (Lord Eldon's brother),—

'You know that after forty a man is always either a fool or a physician.'

'Perhaps he may be both,' the baronet replied in a tone almost indicating doubt as to the physician's sense and knowledge.



XIII

THE CHINESE MISER

Of all the varied forms of selfishness avarice is one of the most curious and incomprehensible. Can it be said that it is solely due to the instinct of preservation or excessive love of life? No; since misers often condemn themselves to starvation, and have been known to die of hunger rather than diminish the hoard they had amassed and concealed. The miser enjoys none of the sweets of existence. His heart is closed against all kinds of sensibility; the misfortunes of the world, of his relations, of his neighbours leave him unmoved. Self is the centre and limit of his being. He has means, and yet is the poorest, the most destitute of men, depriving himself, as he does not only of pleasure, but of necessaries besides. He makes his wealth a valueless quantity. When he has accumulated gold—the cause, end, and spring of so many efforts on the part of others, or himself—he hastens to make it worthless ore again by burying it in the entrails of the earth whence it came! Almost two thousand years ago, Horace said to misers, 'Your treasure painted on a wall will have the same value to you as in precious metal, since you possess the latter only to gloat over it.' And La Fontaine likewise said to them ages later, 'A

stone buried in the place of hiding will be worth just as much as your treasure.' But avarice is a kind of insanity which no experience, no argument, no satire will cure. There was a person well-known in Paris society, who went into the country in the middle of December for a month to avoid making presents on the New Year's Day, and who left the country in midsummer for weeks in order to save the expense of entertaining visitors.

Avarice is probably the most universal vice on the face of the earth. Very curious examples of it have been related in all countries from time immemorial. But we doubt whether a story more comical than one on record in a Chinese chronicle could be found in Europe.

An old Celestial, who had amassed a large amount of property by work, thrift, and usury especially, was on his death-bed. As his wealth was to enrich a crowd of poor relations, nephews, cousins, grandsons, crowded the death-chamber to bid adieu to their departing relative. The sick man had been unconscious for hours, except at rare intervals, and the only sense he clearly retained, when he had a lucid moment, was the sense of ownership. When he at last sunk so low, and was so feeble, that his breath could hardly be detected, his unconsciousness became more profound. It seemed that, if he recovered from it for a moment, he could hardly have enough strength to mutter 'Good-bye.' Within three or four minutes of his death he suddenly rallied, and, with a voice which no one could have suspected, he said very loudly, 'When I am dead, don't go and squander money on coffins like fools. There is an old pig's trough in the yard which has not been used for years, and that will do for me. If you don't take it, my spirit will come back to torment you in the gloom of night. Swear that you will do that for me.'

'We swear, uncle, we swear,' the heirs answered.

He collapsed, not without an apparent smile of satisfaction, and sank lower than before—seemingly for the

final exit. But again he reopened his eyes and said, 'Mind the trough!'

'Uncle' said a nephew, 'it is too short for your body.'

'Never mind; cut off my legs about the knees and put them in on top of me. Don't spend a farthing'—saying which, he sunk into a swoon once more. Now it is all over, they thought, his exertion has killed him. Not quite, though, for he opened one eye, beckoned to a nephew, and whispered, 'Don't use our saw, it would spoil it. Borrow the saw of Ching, our neighbour.' And now, happy in his mind, and no longer electrified into vitality by a racking anxiety, he passed into the nether world.

XIV

BOO!

FOR Englishmen there is no period so fascinating as that which witnessed the dawn of their modern greatness—the age of Elizabeth. This was the time when the empire of the sea passed from Spain to them, when their commerce and colonisation on a large scale were founded, when the great Queen planted the seed of British rule in India, and when intellectual radiancy gave new lustre to their race. Action and thought, heroic deeds and profound ideas — united for the first time in the British people—betokened the future growth of their power and the unique expansion of their sway.

Greece and Rome in antiquity, Italy during the Revival, France, later on, under Louis XIV., were indeed very great, politically and intellectually. In art they remain the supreme exponents of ecstatic contemplation. But the thinkers and poets of the Shakesperian era were not content to imitate Greece, as Rome, Italy and France did. No. They deviated from the beaten roads and struck out new tracks for themselves. The individuality, which makes the English so remark-

able among nations, broke out then in magnificent originality. Shakespeare is so great and imposing a poet that, when we allude to the Elizabethan period, his personality at once leaps with vividness to our recollection, and the brilliant minds, by whom he was surrounded, vanish, so to speak, from our memory so completely does he eclipse them by the luminous splendour of his genius. Yet there were then a Bacon, a Spenser, a Ben Jonson, a Philip Sydney, and others whose names and works, had not Shakespeare existed, would have sufficed to make the reign of Elizabeth a beautiful literary epoch.

Among these men, Ben Jonson was especially celebrated for his brilliant conversational wit. Lord Craven, having often heard much about it, and being desirous to know the writer personally, commissioned an intermediate friend, perhaps Lord Southampton, to invite him to call at Craven House. The poet, who led a very busy life to make both ends meet, and devoted his leisure hours to consorting with authors and players and revelling in nightly convivialities, put off going to Lord Craven for some time; but, being repeatedly reminded of the gracious invitation, he at last made his call. The hall servants, who considered themselves connected with the nobility and thought themselves personages too lofty to receive small people with anything like civility, tried to prevent the caller from proceeding beyond the doorsteps, and showed no little contempt to a man of slovenly appearance, such as Jonson always was. They would have shown a great deal more had they only suspected that the intruder was a mere scribbler of plays —one of the lowest rabble as they would have judged.

'Get away with you, man,' they said, 'get away at once. His lordship wants neither beggars nor vagabonds hanging about here.'

Ben Jonson gave them a piece of his mind, and called upon them to take his message to their master.

'And how dare you, menials,' he added, 'deny a

visitor the entrance of his lordship's house? When he hears of your insolent behaviour he will have you whipped like hounds.'

This infuriated the servants to such a pitch that a battle royal ensued—a loud volley and cross-fire of abuse first, soon followed by hustling, pushing and charging. The scrimmage was at its height, and would, no doubt, have ended in bruises, black eyes and bleeding noses, when Lord Craven chanced to come down the broad staircase, and saw and heard the unseemly confusion going on in the hall where Ben Jonson had forced his way.

'What is the meaning of all this?' he asked in a commanding tone.

The sudden appearance and voice of the master hushed the storm at once, and Ben Jonson, bowing, answered,—

'My lord, your servants would prevent me from seeing your lordship, although I told them you had asked me to come and see you.'

'Who are you, my young fellow?' asked Lord Craven.

'I am Ben Jonson.'

'You, Ben Jonson! Why, you do not look as if you could say "Boo!" to a goose.'

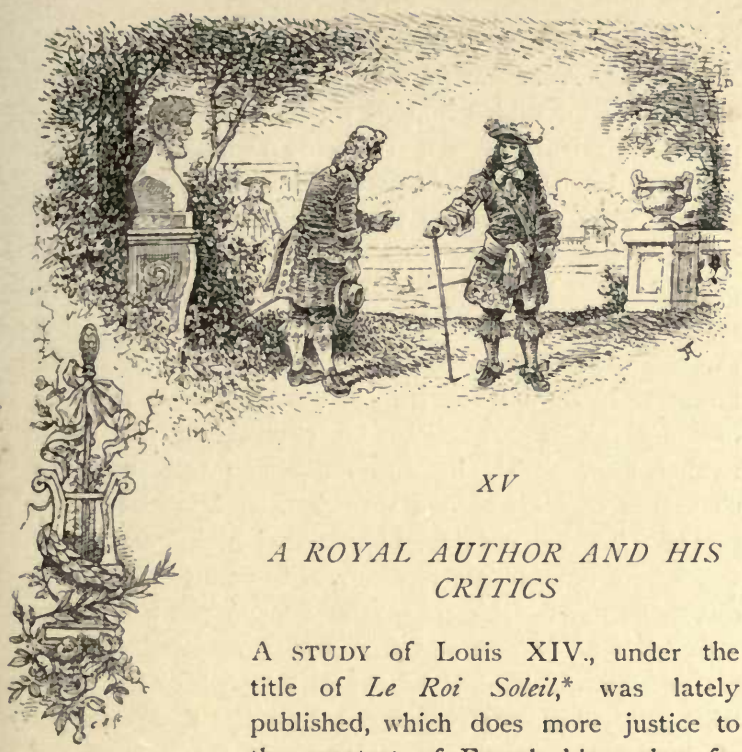
'Boo!' pouted the poet at him.

Lord Craven gave a loud laugh, and said,—

'Ben Jonson, indeed, as I see. Come in, friend, come in. And you, men,' said he to his servants, 'have the sense another time not to judge my friends by their dress.'

The servants, missing the wit of both their betters, wondered how his lordship could admit such a low scoundrel into his company.

This story has often been told, but we have given it because it should be perpetuated, and no book of anecdotes would be complete without being enriched by it.



XV

A ROYAL AUTHOR AND HIS CRITICS

A STUDY of Louis XIV., under the title of *Le Roi Soleil*,* was lately published, which does more justice to the greatest of French kings than far more elaborate works. A real biography of the grand monarch has still to be written. For—to speak of few authors only—neither Voltaire's famous work, which presents only the brilliant aspects of the long reign that deserved to be called an Age, nor St Simon's *Memoirs*, which reveal with passionate animus the narrowness of the king's character, nor Michelet's fierce denunciations—dictated by republican acerbity—which cast strong light on details only, enable us, even if we form our estimate from these three sources taken together, to paint the prince who has been the object of so much admiration and so much blame. A ruler who rounded the natural frontiers of his kingdom, created a maritime, and foreshadowed a colonial, power organised military and civil administration, founded in-

* By Arthur Hassall (Putnam & Sons, 1895).

ternational right, codified laws, must have been a real statesman. A sovereign who encourged industry and commerce, surrounded himself with the ablest men, imposed universal respect, pursued a national policy, protected intellect, art and science, softened manners and fostered refinement in all things, could not have been a vulgar despot. Lastly, the king who maintained a great principle with incomparable dignity, became the highest representative of authority, made his supremacy felt throughout Europe, and was studied as a type fit for imitation in most matters, must assuredly have been no ordinary prince. A man who opened an era could neither be a petty mind, as St Simon took pains to show, nor a contemptible sovereign, as Michelet represented. To the dazzling picture that Voltaire gave us there were indeed deep shadows. The king might, and did, make irretrievable mistakes. He pursued a religious policy full of pitfalls, and fatal to his subjects' welfare; his government became in the latter part of his reign a bigoted and gloomy tyranny; but despite these excesses of despotism, he will always remain in the eyes of the impartial historian, not a great man, but a great king. And what adds much to this view is, that he worked ten and twelve hours a day, saw everything for himself, and never let his ministers take a decision without his sanction. True it is that this excessive centralisation was to lead the monarchy to its downfall, since it accumulated explosives for the French Revolution; but if Louis XV., his successor, had only been less effete, the monarchy would undoubtedly have been so modified as to have been able to meet the exigencies of new conditions, and so been saved from destruction. The weakness of the system lay more in the incapacity of the men who administered it than in its principle. When we see the monarchial principle as strong now in Germany and England as it ever was, and strong through its adoption of unavoidable reforms, we cannot believe that French

monarchy owes its fall to its inner essence. Its debility was due to feeble men—not to want of vitality. At all events, it was great under Louis XIV., and that prince was a great ruler.

And what is extraordinary in his career is that he was almost without instruction. He had, however, a paramount quality which made up for his want of learning, and that was exceptional common sense in all these matters that lay outside the religious sphere. He had solid gifts besides, and amongst others, admirable abilities and unerring taste. The great minds of his time were amazed by his brilliant personality and sound intelligence. The poets lauded him in verse, the musicians sang him in cantatas, the painters painted him on walls and on canvas, the sculptors carved him in marble and bronze. All praised him. There was in this universal laudation much that was due to flattery, certainly, but much of it was also due to the genuine admiration excited by his words and his deeds in important and in small matters. With all his pride he had no paltry vanity; with all his love of authority he liked truth. Had he not the sense to befriend Molière, who had enemies? Had he not the wisdom to allow the circulation of Pascal's *Letters*, and the representation of *Tartufe*, —which aroused so much anger—discriminating at once between religion, which was unassailed in those works, and its unworthy ministers who were the real subjects of censure and satire? And in other cases his judgment, which sometimes went counter to that of men and women of letters in his day, has been ratified by posterity.

A few authenticated anecdotes paint Louis XIV. in amiable colours.

He was reputed to speak and write the purest French in his kingdom, but his poetry was not equal to his prose. Once he showed a composition of his to the poet Boileau, the faultless versifier of the classic period

in France, saying to him, 'M. Boileau, read these verses and tell me what you think of them.'

The poet read the verses and returned them to the king without a word.

'Well, M. Boileau,' said the king, surprised: 'What say you of my poetry?'

The great critic replied with his usual candour and wit, 'Nothing is impossible to Your Majesty: Your Majesty has wished to write bad verses, and Your Majesty has succeeded.'

'M. Boileau,' replied the king, 'not only are you a good poet, but you are also an honest man.'

A little speech which was accompanied with an approving smile. He certainly was no Dionysius.

On another occasion he submitted to the Duke de Grammont a few stanzas of his own, and wishing to know the unbiassed opinion of a man noted for his taste in such matters.

'Here, my Lord Duke, are verses which were given me to-day,' said he; 'read them, and just tell me whether they are not of the feeblest kind.'

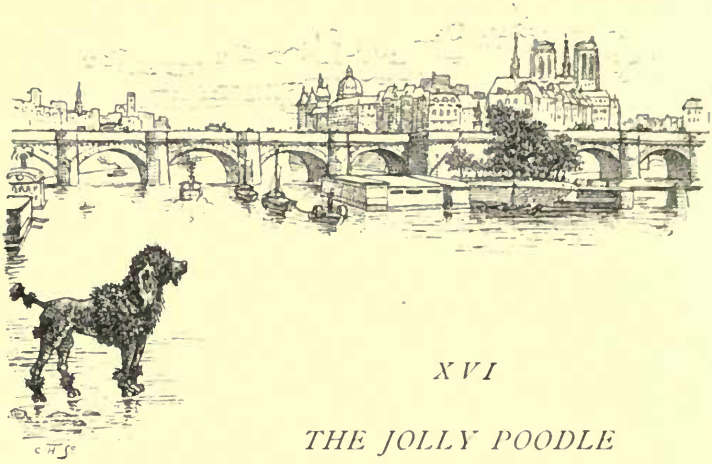
The Duke looked at them carefully, and handing them back, with a bow to the king, 'Sire,' said he, Your Majesty's judgment is as right in this as in all else, for I never saw poorer and more impertinent lines.'

'I am glad,' replied the king, 'to hear you say what they are worth, for the verses are mine, and to the fire they go!'

The Duke trying to retrieve his false step, cried, with great concern, 'Oh! Your Majesty, let me look at them again, I beseech you; I read them hurriedly, and I must have sadly misjudged them.'

'Not at all, Duke,' replied Louis XIV. 'You spoke your mind with candour, and I had much rather burn my verses than run the risk of letting bad poetry of mine loose in the world.' And to his honour neither Boileau

nor Grammont lost an *iota* of the royal favour they enjoyed. Would this have been the case if James I., or the Great Frederick, or Napoleon had been the subject of their criticism?



XVI

THE JOLLY POODLE

THE Pont Neuf was, until the middle of the present century, the finest bridge in Paris. It goes across both branches of the Seine at their point of junction at the end of the City Island. Those who have visited Paris may remember it by the equestrian statue of Henry IV. which adorns a broad platform near the centre. The Pont Neuf — no longer new, since it is upwards of three hundred years old — was long considered a marvel of bridge architecture for its solid structure, height, breath and length. There was a saying about it which magnified its grandeur in the popular imagination. 'It is so lengthy and so crowded, it was said, that at all hours of the day, one could see on it a soldier, a monk, a fine lady and a white horse.' Until a time which middle-aged men can remember, the bridge, before the building of the Arts Bridge, two hundred yards lower down, was the hunting ground of costers, itinerant hawkers, pedlars, dog-shearers, stocking-darners and beggars. Paris cries could be heard there in all their deafening varieties, because the bridges across the Seine were few and far between, and the Pont Neuf was the greatest thoroughfare in the town.

Once a gentleman, followed by a black poodle, was crossing the bridge, when, on the platform of Henry

IV., he was accosted by a dog-shearer, who said to him with a bow, pointing to the humble quadruped,—

'This is an ugly dog, and no mistake, sir.'

'True; he certainly is far from pretty,' replied the gentleman.

'But, sir, I could transform him into a darling.'

'You? And how?'

'Why, sir, I would shear him all over.'

'He would look rather naked, wouldn't he? Hardly decent?'

'Ah! but I would leave a ruffle of hair round his neck, sir.'

'A ruffle around his neck?' answered the gentleman. 'Why, he would look like a fool—just like Punch!'

'Not at all, sir; and if you will only look at a fashionable poodle—I mean one that belongs to a good house—you will see him sporting a ruffle.'

'Is that all?' inquired the gentleman.

'Not quite, for on each side of his nose I would leave a strong moustache.'

'A moustache would look too fierce for a poodle, I should say, and scarcely in harmony with a ruffle.'

'It is, sir, an ornament appreciated by ladies, married or single, and the fiercer the more manly. He is a dog, don't you see? As to harmony, look at Henry IV. over there, has he not a ruffle and a moustache? And the model of kings can stand as a model to a poodle, surely.'

'Well, I won't discuss the point. You may be right.'

'Right? Well, of course I am. You may happen to know what love St Rock had for his dog, and he took care his poodle had a splendid pair of moustaches —an innovation of his hundreds of years ago.'

'I did not remember it,' said the gentleman.

'No wonder; you were not born then,' said the man, slyly.

'Were you?'

'No; but I know a bit or two of history.'

'So I perceive. Well, what would you do next?'

'Next, I should leave all the hair on his ears.'

'They would be like bunches of grapes, too big and heavy, I think.'

'But, sir, the bigger the ears the better to hear with, anatomists will tell you; shaved ears would remind ladies of a pig. They would call him a horror.'

'Granted. But I am afraid you could do nothing else to beautify him.'

'Beg your pardon, good sir, for after that, just above his paws, I would leave elegant cuffs.'

'Never heard of such a thing,' said the pedestrian. 'Wouldn't he look namby-pamby?'

'Bless my soul! Namby-pamby? You mean dainty! The great ladies of the St Germain Faubourg, who know what beauty is like, have their dogs decked in that way, and adore them. They wouldn't look at them without cuffs.'

'Well, what next?'

'Well, then, finally, I should leave just a tippet at the tip of his tail.'

'Oh! a tippet! That would look rather pretentious?'

'Pretentious? Not in the least. It is the top of fashion, and the Queen Marie Amélie, who is known for her modest simplicity and taste, has just such a dog. Shall I try, sir?'

'I don't mind,' replied the gentleman.

'All right, sir, you'll just see.' And at once the man began operating upon the good-humoured dog, and gave a dexterous example of the exercise of his art and calling. In half-an-hour the transformation had been accomplished, and master doggie was a different being. 'And now, what do you think of him?' said the man, with conscious pride. 'Isn't he a jewel?'

'Yes; upon my word, he is charming! He even looks lively.'

'Why, sir, just look how happy he is! He is wagging his tippet to express his delight. Don't you think it is like magic to have turned an ugly beast into such a cherub?'

'True, and I must acknowledge you are a very clever fellow.'

'Why, sir, they call me an artist,' said the man.

'Well, I do think the title is deserved without flattering you. I am glad to have seen it. I should not have thought that anyone, with a pair of shears and a dog, could, between them, work such a sort of miracle; and I'll remember it, too.' And as the gentleman said 'Good-bye, my good fellow,' he began to walk away.

'I am glad you will remember that, sir, but you are now forgetting something.'

'Forgetting something! What?'

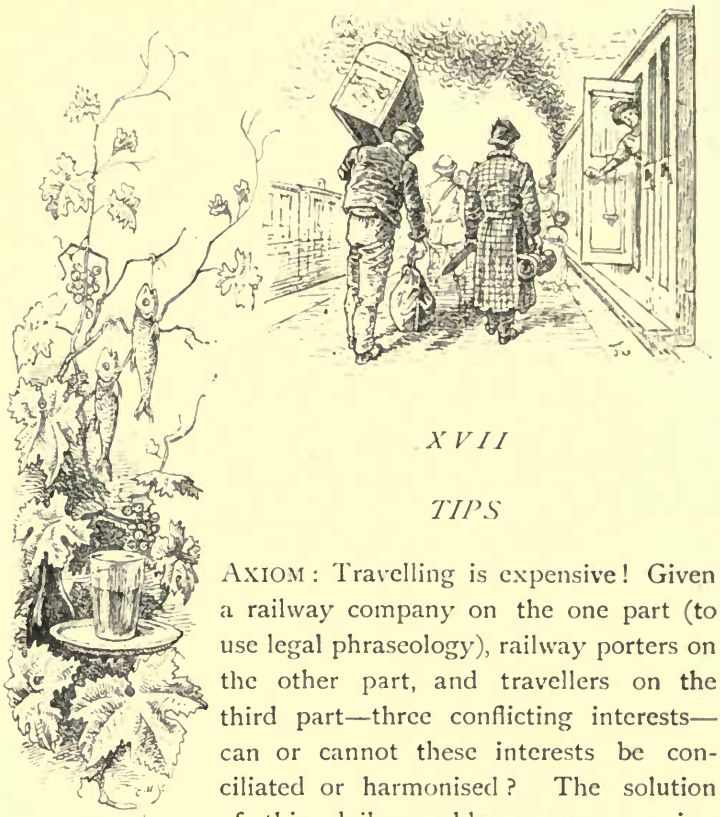
'Why, you are forgetting to pay me.'

'To pay you! And what for?'

'Why, for shearing your dog.'

My dog?' replied the gentleman. 'I never saw the thing in my life before you showed it to me. It is a stray dog!'

Tableau! And as policemen were close by, there was nothing for the artist to do but look at the gentleman and the dog departing in peace, both equally happy and unconcerned, whilst the ingratitude of both made him swear . . . he would not be taken in again. The only satisfaction that softened his disappointment was the inward conviction — no fancy, he was vain enough to think—that the gentleman had come off only second best in Parisian wit. What a pity this was marred by the practical victory of the gentleman! And that dog! trotting away with his tail up and showing off! If he ever came that way again he would drown the brute!



XVII

TIPS

AXIOM: Travelling is expensive! Given a railway company on the one part (to use legal phraseology), railway porters on the other part, and travellers on the third part—three conflicting interests—can or cannot these interests be conciliated or harmonised? The solution of this daily problem seems as impossible as the squaring of the circle; for, either the company must be dissatisfied with its servants if they accept tips, or the porters aggrieved if they are left without fees, or the travellers unjustly taxed if they pay the porters. As the difficulty cannot be adjusted to the satisfaction of the three parties, it follows, logically, that it is best to reduce the evil to a minimum. If it be so, we may adjudge the palm of wisdom to a very ingenious gentleman whom people might do worse than imitate.

A passenger in one of our busy railway stations received the particular attention of a zealous porter, who took charge of his rug, found a nice compartment for him, and had his luggage duly labelled and stored

away in the van—the whole performance being made more pleasant by an accompaniment of nods on the one side, and of salutes on the other. A moment before the train steamed away the porter came to the compartment window of his passenger, and, touching his cap, said,—

'You won't forget the porter, sir?'

'What is your name?' the traveller asked.

'My name is Jones.'

'Very well, Jones,' the gentleman said, 'I will never forget your name in my life.'

A few days later the porter had the good luck to see the same gentleman alighting from a train. He quickly went forward, and stood by the traveller to tender his services. He hailed a cab, put the luggage on it, saw the passenger inside, closed the door, and, made wiser by experience, he worded a new formula which left apparently no room for misconception.

'Something to drink, sir,' said he, smiling and touching his cap.

'You would like something to drink, Jones?' said the gentleman.

'Yes, sir, I should.'

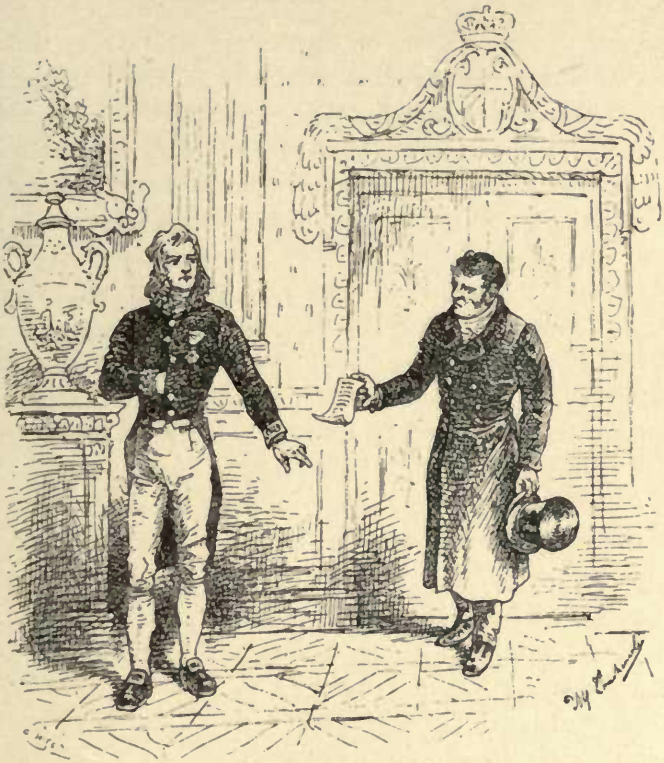
'Well then, Jones, you have a bloater for dinner, and if you do not drink after that, eat a pair of kippers, and you will drink like a fish. You let me know if you don't.'

The cab drove away leaving the porter with strong misgivings about things being for the best in this best-of-all possible worlds.

But what about the clever traveller?

Bronze and marble statues are raised to innumerable M.P.'s, mayors and aldermen—very justly we consider. Did not this great man or that confer a lasting benefit on his native place by erecting a drinking-fountain? Did not this other great man or that cast a lasting lustre on his small town or borough, by obtaining the knighthood for the conspicuous part he took in the

expensive reception of a royal prince? And for such acts of unselfish devotion to the public good they should be held in high estimation, if only *pour encourager les autres.* No one in the country would grudge them a testimonial of grateful recognition. It is true that a Byron has not been so honoured; but then he was only a poet, and though he is universally admired as such, he was not a practical genius; had he been he would not have given up his life to the cause of Greek independence. But here is a practical traveller, who benefits—not a place like Rottingdean, not a country like Greece—but the whole of the world; and yet no statue records his service to humanity at large in emancipating it—if it only knew—from 'involuntary servitude!' O Carlyle! thou wert not much mistaken in thy verdict!



XVIII

DEFEATING THE ENEMY

BEING a bishop, would you fight the Church? I would. Being a great noble, would you side with the people against the aristocracy? I would. Then, though born a natural supporter of legitimate kings, you would assist their enemies? I would. Would you consent to serve a republic? I would. Would you help in its fall? I would. Would you serve an upstart dynasty and a military despotism? I would. After supporting the popular cause, would you accept from the new despot the title of prince and a principality? I would. Would you be ready to plot against him? I would. Would you assist in upsetting him? I would. Would you

support the restoration of legitimate princes? I would. Would you serve the reactionary and clerical monarchy thus restored? I would. Would you give your support to a new usurper who would upset it? I would. Then you would serve as a statesman every form of government in turn, and, while serving it, conspire against it? I would.

So was Talleyrand—whose cynicism was equal to his astuteness—a Machiavelli in action for nearly forty years, a unique figure in history. His worldly and political experience was so unrivalled, his mental resources so inexhaustible, that each kind of sovereignty was compelled to make a friend of him in order to prevent him being an enemy; and though his treachery to every *régime* was well known, no power ventured to dispense with him. He had the audacity to continually plot against Napoleon, and the emperor being aware of it, yet dared neither punish him nor dismiss him, and thought it the better course to make use of his abilities. The most cunning and insidious of diplomatists, he solved difficulties which other statesmen would have made more intricate and thorny. Everyone knew that he could not be trusted; but his assurance and wiles were so incredible that while he told the most shameful lies, and practised upon his hearer the basest deception, he led his victim to believe him and to fancy him an overrated man. The entrapped victim thought he was out-diplomatising the apparently gullible Talleyrand!

Public opinion, such was his repute, ascribed to him every witticism that obtained currency. But many *bons mots* for which he is generally credited did not originate with him. His reputation was due to the art with which he *prepared* his impromptu sayings beforehand—a fact familiar to the people who were in daily contact with him. His sayings thus prepared, were always 'short, terse, just and well-coined.' He excelled in those which had a three-fold meaning, and which enabled him to

interpret them as he chose, according to circumstances. That he had wonderful readiness in uttering sharp repartees is nevertheless true, and these were numerous enough to give him celebrity, so that there is no doubt about the authenticity of his most famous aphorisms. The reader may remember a few. 'Speech has been given to man to hide his thought,' he said, and he acted upon that principle.

Speaking of Madame de Staël, with whom he carried on a flirtation, he said, 'A man must have known that woman intimately to appreciate the happiness there is in loving a fool.'

A public servant who had done him good service, strongly expostulated with him to obtain promotion and increased pay.

'And, monseigneur,' he said, by way of peroration, 'I must live!'

'I do not see the necessity of it,' replied Talleyrand.

It was reported to him that the Archbishop of Paris had said, with a view of its being repeated to the prince, 'For M. de Talleyrand I would give my life.'

Talleyrand, guessing that this was a preliminary speech meant to propitiate him, thwarted the probable intention of the prelate by loudly saying, 'He might make a better use of it.'

But prince though he was, he would use artifice even with small people in private matters; and the following little story is an instance of his way of getting out of an awkward fix.

He enjoyed a very large income. His extensive property, and the salary to which his high official position entitled him, made him one of the richest men in France. Yet, in spite of this fact, he was always in debt, and purveyors had frequently to wait some long time for the settlement of their accounts. The coach-builder of the Minister, having called time after time for his money in vain, and being at length compelled

by pressing bills to collect his accounts, went again to the Palace, determined to make no fruitless call on this occasion. He would see the prince if necessary. He sat waiting for hours in the antechamber, and as he could not be persuaded to go away, he was at last ushered into the prince's study.

'What is the matter?' asked Talleyrand.

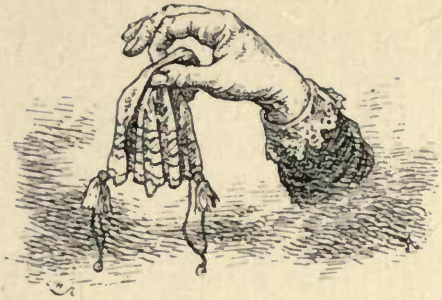
'Monseigneur, I have brought you my bill.'

'Well, what about it?'

'Will your Excellency tell me when I shall be paid, as I particularly want to know.'

'Want to know?' replied the prince. 'My man, I am in the habit of answering neither impertinent questions nor inquisitive people—and you *are* inquisitive.' Thereupon the minister turned his back on the coachbuilder, who had to wait patiently not to lose his rich customer.

The insolence of the ancient nobility to inferior creditors was far more offensive. Mockery, as M. Dimanche experienced, generally accompanied their plea for delay; and Talleyrand—his revolutionary ideas notwithstanding—showed that he, like his ancestors, could add insult to injury. But there was in his arrogance, at least a certain manly bluntness that was far more bearable than the derision and irony of former times. But as he was Talleyrand he could not help using artifice.



XIX

THE LEARNED MAN'S SUCCESS

Of the four great ages which history has recorded, and which truly deserve to be remembered as the Golden Ages of civilisation, that of Leo X. was the most fascinating.

If Italy gave birth, then, to no sculptors to be compared with those of Greece in the Age of Pericles, to no architects comparable to those of Rome in the Augustan Age, to no authors equal to the prose writers of Louis XIV.'s Age, yet she had a Michael Angelo in sculpture, a Bramante in architecture, a Machiavelli in prose literature. She held in these branches of art at least the second rank, whilst in painting she was supreme beyond compare, as she was in music and science. In poetry, Latin and Italian, she was not unequal to ancient Greece, ancient Rome and classical France.

Leo X., like Pericles, Augustus and Louis XIV., was the universal protector of writers, artists, philosophers and men of science, and in consequence many works were dedicated to him.

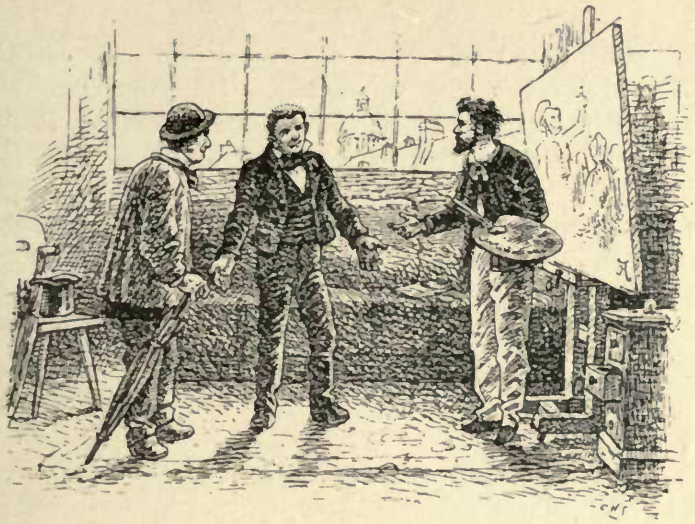
An alchemist, who had written a huge book on the art of making gold, sent a copy to the Pope with a fine dedication with the view of obtaining a recompense, and in order to make his existence felt by practical

obviousness, he assiduously went to the Vatican, and stood every morning among the row of courtiers, who lined the gallery leading to the Sistine Chapel, to bow their obeisance to His Holiness. The Pope, gifted with a quick eye as he was, soon detected the new face, and soon understood the situation. And, as he was as ready in wit as he was cultured in art, he agreed with his Secretary to give some sort of satisfaction to the devoted man of science. One morning, then, as Leo was on his way to mass, he stopped opposite the alchemist and said, with a smile full of promise, 'I have perused with much interest the learned work you have composed, and I have much admired your useful discovery. I think such results deserve encouragement, and I have therefore commissioned our trusty Cardinal to hand over to you a suitable reward. I trust you will accept it, unworthy though it is.'

And he passed on leaving the alchemist all quivering with expectation and joy. The Cardinal-Secretary then came up to him in his turn, and said with the utmost suavity,—

'Messer, since you have discovered the art of making gold, His Holiness has thought I had better give you a purse to put it in.' And, handing him a large empty purse, he passed on and followed the Pope.

The alchemist slowly returned home to meditate upon the vanities of this vale of tears.



XX

THE VILLAGERS' PATRON SAINT

WHAT an interesting book a conscientious and learned writer could compose if he would set to write the biography of the French peasant! There is probably no more worthy man in the world than this fine specimen of humanity. What kind of endurance and martyrdom did he not go through in the Middle Ages, when, ground to the dust by enforced labour, he reaped for his pains nothing but contempt, blows and starvation? All the fruit of his work went to others — to the Church, to the nobility, and to the king — and when he was flung into the army to fight for his masters, he, the poor pariah, had still heart enough left in him to win victories, or die in the attempt on the battlefield.

Nowadays, after the Revolution that emancipated him, he is well-to-do. He is wealthy, and he can lend his earnings to the State to the extent of millions and millions. But he has remained the enduring man he was before

—the hard-working servant of the soil he now possesses. His wealth has not spoilt him. He remembers his former poverty and its wretchedness, and, to shield himself from any risk of relapsing into that miserable condition, he is thrifty beyond all men, provident beyond all classes, and prudent beyond all temptation. And when the flag of his country claims him, he leaves his field and vineyard to fight the foe if necessary, but he returns to his vineyard and field to devote to them the new qualities he has acquired in the army—cleanliness, order, cheerfulness, sociability and love of honour and duty.

A famous novelist a few years ago tried to depict him as an unscrupulous, flint-hearted and rapacious monster; but this calumnious portrait no more resembles the original than a murderer resembles ordinary mankind. But this worthy man loves money — that money which his daily, incessant exertions has dug out of the ground he tills. Yet, though he is miserly —for he is so, as a rule—he will now and then put his hand into his pocket and show a certain amount of hard-cash generosity — the more creditable because it goes against the grain. Only he must have his money's worth. All this, the following example of unsophisticated *naïveté* may serve to show:—

The inhabitants of a large French village were extremely fond of their priest, because he was jovial, kindly, ever ready to give advice or consolation in the most brotherly spirit, and, what is more, ever prompt to assist the needy out of his own pittance. He even made small loans for which he refused interest.

The parishioners, wishing to offer a testimonial of their regard and affection to the good man, secretly subscribed a fund for that purpose—a rare occurrence in France, since peasants have a greater love of money than of humanity. But, as practical men, they endeavoured to discover what would be most suitable,

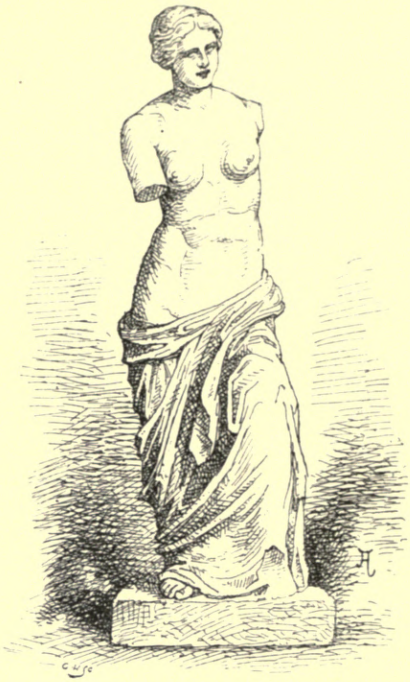
or prove most agreeable to the recipient, and they tried to sound the priest himself.

The reverend old man was not slow in guessing the drift of the adroit inquisitiveness of the people, and made it understood that a gift to the church of the village would redound to the credit of the present generation, and remain as a lasting memento of his parishioners' love to their creed and to himself, whereas a personal gift would be lost upon a disinterested individual. The idea was highly appreciated, and it was decided to give the church a picture of St Sebastian, its patron saint. In consequence, two villagers were deputed to go to Paris and call upon an artist to manage the affair.

The price was agreed to, and the painter asked his patrons whether he should paint the saint alive or dead. The villagers, who had not given a thought to this matter, were taken aback by the difficulty, and they retired to consult each other upon the question. When they had duly deliberated, they said to the artist, 'Mr Painter, paint him alive, and if our people don't like him in life it will be easy enough to kill him!'

'And very practical too! . . . No risk of wasting money that way,' the artist said, with a smile.

'Just our idea, Mr Painter!' they shrewdly replied.



XXI

PSYCHE AND VENUS

THE impressions wrought upon the mind of a person destitute of artistic education by a masterpiece of painting or sculpture are often extremely curious. Every one of us has heard the unsophisticated beholder of a peerless statue exclaiming, 'Look at the veins! isn't it well done?' Another beholder, gazing at a Dutch picture, will be delighted by a detail which appeals to his understanding, and exclaim, 'Look at the knives on the table! don't they shine?' One gives vent to his admiration—since he knows he must admire something —in a different way, and enthusiastically exclaims, 'What a lovely frame!' Another visitor to the gallery can hardly make out why he came there, and being puzzled what to think of the pictures he sees, merely says,

'I wonder how much that can be worth?' The tourists who visit the splendid picture galleries of Italy—even those that are educated in other respects—seldom have a notion of the chief characteristics which respectively distinguish the Florentine School, the Venetian School, the Roman School, the Dutch School, to speak only of few, and they go away without any new ideas regarding the design, the colour, the composition, or the realism, that constitutes the main feature, hence the main lesson of each school. Apart from the gratification of mere curiosity, the interest they take in art is limited to the narrowest compass. This obviously explains the rapidity with which some visitors gallop through galleries and museums. You may daily observe a score or two of people running through the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, or the Brera Palace in Milan, in just half-an-hour—exactly the time it takes to walk along the rooms at a good pace. If pictures awaken a certain feeling of curiosity on account of the story they generally tell, sculpture, on the other hand, awakens hardly any, and you see visitors passing, without a pause, along a row of statues and bas-reliefs of ravishing beauty, with the vacant and bored look of disappointed expectation. But it is unnecessary to go to a gallery to discover the hopeless want of taste and culture which very estimable people can exhibit when in presence of a work of art.

We all know the famous bust of Psyche, whose mutilated head, just above the forehead, presents a smooth surface from the front to the back part of the skull, just as if the upper portion had been cleanly struck off with an axe. A lady who was by no means uneducated, except in æsthetic matters apparently, went once to a beautiful house, and after seeing a number of art reproductions, came in front of a copy of Psyche. 'Well, I never,' she said, with an air of discriminating judgment, 'what have they put a flat iron upon her head for, I wonder? That can't be right.' This is a true story.

The writer of this collection once bought a plaster-of-Paris Venus of Milo, and brought it to his rooms with great care. He summoned his landlady, and begged her to order her servants to leave the dusting of the statue to himself. She smilingly acquiesced, and looking at the Venus, 'Is it considered beautiful?' she said.

'Yes; it is one of the finest pieces of carving in the world,' he answered, studiously avoiding to use the words Greek statuary, not to puzzle her too much.

She looked at it again carefully to see for herself whether she could endorse his statement, and then, with a smile of satisfaction at her own acuteness, 'I suppose,' she said, 'it is meant to represent broken arms?'

This Venus was destined to evoke a very different feeling in the maiden lady who succeeded the previous housekeeper. As the writer was going out, after his first interview with her, he met her in the hall, and, as in the first instance, he requested her in the most winning tone not to touch the Venus. 'Do you mean,' she inquired, with visible frumpish scorn, 'do you mean the *female* upon the chimney-piece?' The way in which she pronounced the word *female* was just as rancorous and appalling as it was comical. By a curious coincidence her name was Miss Grundy.

XXII

FRIAR AND BISHOP

FREE-THINKING in the eighteenth century was so general in France that the very nobility—the natural champion of religion and the Church—had imbibed it almost in the same degree as the emancipated middle-class. The only difference was that the aristocracy had not discarded the garb of Christians. The nobles kept up the appearances of being staunch Catholics. They went to Mass—ladies especially—if only to maintain themselves in the good grace of Church dignitaries and the favour of the Court. They also thought it advisable to continue to observe the outward forms of devotion as a necessary example to their peasantry and servants, for they did not want the clergy to lose their salutary influence over the lower orders. For this reason, the majority of lords and titled ladies went to Confession, and partook of the Holy Communion at least once a year—at Easter. For the same reason, they also allowed a friar to visit their houses frequently—usually once a week—for the purpose of having unctuous exhortations delivered to the menials of their household.

A clever monk had made himself very popular among the servants of several noble mansions of the St Germain Faubourg by his good humour and friendly addresses. Each day in the week he called at a great house. His pious advice was always short and unpretending, but it was interlarded at all times by amusing anecdotes and smart little stories that made his visits extremely welcome. Whenever he came, a cheerful gathering crammed the lower hall, for the servants asked their friends to come in to enjoy his familiar sermon, and the whole thing was considered as a sort of entertainment far more than a formal function. As soon as the performance was over, he was eagerly asked to take some refreshment, and, without much pressing, he affably assented, and soon sat down in front of a table which was quickly placed in the middle of the hall. There he would despatch a dozen mouthfuls of the remnants of a game pie and two tumblers of Volnay, then the leg of a turkey and another glass. Between each mouthful and each sip he would talk pleasantly, and delight the humble audience which stood around him with more stories and funny tales. Then he would dispose of the breast of a pheasant and swallow a tumbler of Graves, laughingly rattling away. Half-a-dozen larks pushed before his plate would follow the way the turkey and game had taken, not without a few sips of Bouzy and two or three jokes. Then, after half a partridge, he would, 'just to taste it,' have a slice or two of truffled galantine, and moisten that with two or three glasses of Clos-Vougeot. And as to this open grape tart, and this blancmange, and this jelly, and that almond trifle, oh! he would 'just have some to see whether they were not as good as on a previous occasions.' He would have 'nothing more'—except a few biscuits and grapes and a couple of glasses of sparkling champagne.

'Father, you must now tell us what you think of

this Maraschino and this Chartreuse; his lordship says he never had anything like it.'

'By Our Lady, he is right. That Maraschino is more luscious than honey; but the Chartreuse beats it, I think. I am not sure though, and I'll take another thimbleful to see.'

Then chocolate and black coffee were brought in, and, in the midst of quaint and comical stories, he would slowly sip both with exceptional gusto. After that he could never be prevailed upon to accept anything. No; he would now go to the drawing-room of the countess to pay his respects to her ladyship. So, after his blessing to his admirers, and their thanks and bows to him, up the grand staircase he went with crimson face and steady gait.

Of the six or seven houses which had the privilege of his spiritual direction, there was one to which he was a little partial. He was treated just as well elsewhere, but, somehow, the hospitality of that house offered—if not greater quality, quantity and variety of fare — vague attractions which he particularly relished. It might be the comfort of the hall, or the religious zeal of the household, or was it the cooking, the wines, the coffee or the liqueurs? It was possibly the charming affability of her ladyship, or the attention he received from the company in the drawing-room. It was perhaps a little of all these things together. He did not know. But he liked it rather better than the other mansions he adorned with his presence.

He lived in the happy illusion of believing that the lunch (!) he took downstairs was 'kept dark'—and indeed it was in most houses—but in this very mansion her ladyship had become aware of it, and she was much amused at the cleverness, appetite, wit and appreciation of good things displayed by the 'jolly friar.' She laughed heartily every week when her confidential maid related to her, in all their richness

of details, the address and tales of the monk, and enumerated the dishes and wines he had conjured away. After a time, not being able to keep the doings of the good friar to herself, she told the whole thing to her intimate circle. The subject afforded so suggestive a scope for jesting that every week, when the holy man entered the drawing-room, there was a natural desire to draw him out, and hear his tales straight from him, for then he would be pretty sure to stammer or lisp after his copious ingurgitations. His step and demeanour were steady enough, but it was suspected his tongue would disclose a certain inability to speak as glibly as an hour before, or on the other hand perhaps exhibit more unrestrained volubility; and, either way, the company would enjoy his embarrassment, or his greater freedom, as the case might be.

The Friar, however, with great presence of mind, resisted every allurement, and kept on his guard, lest he should betray the effects of good cheer. Once, on the day of his visit, the company determined either to make him talk to test the readiness of his speech, or to make him drink to test his physical capacity, and, what was more laughable, to make him drink water — a beverage for which he could have but the greatest aversion at such a time. The plot was arranged beforehand.

When the Friar appeared with a countenance as richly illuminated as a thirteenth-century missal, her ladyship, after an amiable bow, asked him to tell her and her friends what had been the subject of his exhortation on that day. His eloquence was highly prized by her household, and yet, neither she nor her friends had ever had the pleasure of applauding it.

'Will you not, dear Father, repeat your address to us; we should be so delighted and edified if you would. Here is our Lord Bishop, who knows you well by repute, and who would also appreciate your homely words.'

'Yes, Father,' added the Bishop, we should truly enjoy it.'

'My Lord and Madam,' replied the Friar, humbly, 'after my day's duties I feel unequal to venture upon speaking again. It is so hot, too, though we are in October. Kindly excuse me.'

'Oh! how thoughtless of me, dear father,' rejoined the lady. 'Yes, the heat to-day is surprising, and you are indeed very hot, as I see, and so we will not trouble you. But one thing, however, I must insist upon, and that is you should take some refreshment, for I would never forgive myself to let you go without after your fatiguing work.'

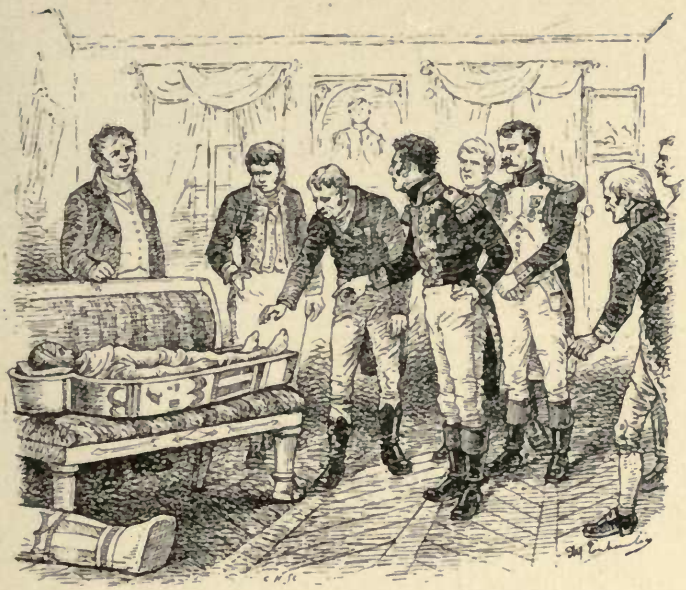
A bow and a gesture from the Friar indicated his polite refusal. But the lady had rung a silver bell close by her, and to a small negro who appeared, she said, 'Bring some refreshment to the holy Father.'

In a few seconds the little one brought in a huge glass of water on a gold tray, and presented it to the friar. He, who from both corners of his eyes surveyed the field, thought he detected suppressed smiles on all the faces around. Was there not a trap? A slight giggle behind a fan confirmed him in his suspicions. It behoved him to escape the danger! So he looked at the Bishop, and with a bow, 'Monseigneur,' said he, with as much composure as he could command. 'Will Your Lordship do me the special favour to bless my refreshment?'

'Certainly, dear Father,' replied his superior. And, accordingly, the Bishop with two fingers raised over the tumbler, rapidly pronounced *sotto voce* the sacramental words.

The Friar took up the glass, and then, as if suddenly remembering the reverence due to consecrated things, he quickly said, 'Now I think of it, Monseigneur, it would be very unbecoming and sinful on my part to drink *holy water*, and rather than violate the duties of my calling I had better bear thirst and abstain in all humility.'

So saying, he replaced the tumbler on the tray, and making a general obeisance to the whole company, and another profound bow to the Bishop and her ladyship, he gracefully retired with the honours of war, to the good-humoured amazement of all those present, who laughed at their own discomfiture and the shrewdness of their intended victim.



XXIII

THE MUMMY

WITH all their faults, shortcomings, vanities, pretensions and frivolities, the French nobles of the pre-revolutionary era were at least brave, refined and educated. The upstart nobility created by Napoleon, by the side of its prime quality — bravery — shared with the old nobility many defects of the latter. Most of the imperial grandees, princes, dukes, viceroys, having risen from the lower strata of the nation, were more or less tainted with the natural sins and defects inherent to their origin. Few of them possessed refinement; fewer still had received any education. This want of the two essentials of highly-civilised society was often more conspicuous in their wives than in themselves; for the men, guided by practical common sense and experience at most times, and accustomed to obey a master who had clear ideas and always gave precise orders, had, in the activity and rush of their daily duties, a screen

which easily hid their lack of information, whereas the women, wholly given up to the enjoyment of greatness, committed, as the Duchess of Abrantes and other authorities have revealed, the most comical incongruities of manners and speech. But now and then the *parvenu* marshals, though generally on their guard, made an exhibition of themselves which it was not easy to match.

Denon, the famous chief of the learned men who accompanied Bonaparte in his Egyptian campaign, and conducted the explorations of the Nile Valley, once, long after the expedition, gave a great dinner to the civil and military celebrities of the day, amongst whom shone Augereau, Duke of Castiglione. The host said, during the banquet, that he would give a unique treat to his guests after dinner, for he had just received a lovely mummy from Egypt, a princess, too, and he would exhibit her to the company. He had, he said, divested her of her outer wrappings, and he could assure his friends that she was a perfect beauty of twenty or twenty-two, equally admirable for the symmetry of her body, and the exquisite delicacy of her features. The dinner over, everyone, full of curiosity and expectation, followed Denon to a large drawing-room, and there, in the middle, was the Egyptian princess, stretched out on a broad, striped satin sofa. All the guests crowded so quickly round that it was sometime before everybody could have a peep at the beauty. When Augereau, by craning his neck, at last obtained a full view of the Egyptian wonder, he said, 'Why, Denon, she is dead, is your mummy!'

Laughter in Homeric roars met his discovery, and Augereau laughed loudest, shouting, 'You are fine scientists not to have seen that at once, I saw it at a glance!'

The tableau was complete.

XXIV

THE CARDINAL'S TEETH

If a Court be the theatre of ambition and conflicting interests, it is also the school of society and politeness. The violence of passions and the danger of rivalry are, however, much softened by refined etiquette and respectful formulas. The Court is a fertile soil for two opposite defects—pride and servility; for love of influence, wealth and luxury on the one hand, and lowering of morality and character on the other, must be united to make courtiers. Flattery, the usual means courtiers use to secure self-advancement, is, as a rule, far more successful than merit, because it is a kind of deceit which irresistibly attracts its victims. A lofty soul never descends to use it, but the sycophant is a mixed being who unites a base spirit with a subtle mind. He trades upon the knowledge that vanity, pride and presumption are the accomplices of his fawning; but he is aware also that unless he administers his sweet poison with delicate discernment he will defeat his own object, and cause disgust rather than pleasure. He must, therefore, be careful to burn incense sparingly so as to make it

acceptable. Sometimes adulation becomes practical, and finds an expression in *acts* rather than in words; and the flatterer who devises a fresh means of pleasing, and thus makes a clever discovery, will at once be imitated by all courtiers. When this is the case, flattery assumes proportions to which there are no bounds. It may affect a whole nation, and bring about the adoption of most ridiculous fashions. Under the hump-backed Richard III., courtiers bent and rounded their backs on the plea that such an attitude added much grace to beauty. Queen Mary of Medici's flaxen hair caused the court to adopt white powder. The reddish hair of Marie Antoinette brought in the fashion of gold powder. The small stature and bald head of Louis XIV. caused courtiers to adopt the high wig and high heels which the King had judged necessary to increase his own size. Courtiers had, then, so to speak, drawn up the Magna Charta of adulation—Court etiquette, which became a complicated code, ruling the aristocracy, and serving flatterers as a supreme guide in all things. The gift of the candlestick, which St Simon describes, shows us to what length etiquette was carried, and what praise was bestowed on the happy mortal who had had the rare privilege of escorting the King to his bed-chamber. Such praise was in reality addressed to the Prince.

Louis XIV., as we all know, was the object of wholesale flattery, and yet this sovereign, though by no means insensible to it, was never a slave to flatterers, His rare common sense guarded him from their baneful influence. The Duke de La Rochefoucauld, the highest type of the courtier that ever lived, was so afraid to lose an occasion to praise his master, that for more than twenty years he remained in the King's company without sleeping away from the Court a single night. But his tact was such that his flattery 'in action' was taken for personal devotion. Never was he suspected of having any other motive than sincere friendship, and

beyond the privilege of enjoying the royal presence every day, he never obtained any substantial benefit. The King was proof against exaggerated flattery. In one circumstance only does he seem to have been biassed by it. Chamillard, who was the best billiard player at Court, was so assiduous in losing every game he had with the King, that his master made him a minister of State. To his skill, and the use he made of it, he owed his appointment to the Finance Department, although he had no particular aptitude. But Louis XIV. knew that he could do no harm, for the ministers of State, after the death of Colbert and Louvois, were mere secretaries who carried his orders out, and Chamillard was as efficient a minister as anyone. The King, besides, rewarded the man just as much for his excellent qualities and charming amiability as for his billiard defeats, so that his elevation was not the result of flattery alone.

Court people, who knew the sovereign well, were careful to avoid excess of praise. Two consummate courtiers, however, were carried a little too far, and occasioned much surprise. The whole Court took care to be present every evening at the royal supper, for that was the time when His Majesty was at all communicative, and when every one in turn hoped to be specially noticed. The two or three noblemen whom the King addressed had the happiness of being universally envied, and were courted for days by the highest personages. It need hardly, therefore, be said that wits and flatterers vied with one another in their replies to the Prince.

One evening the King, who was advancing in years, complained to the Cardinal de Charost how much he felt the loss of his teeth, and how much he envied the happy possessors of good teeth.

'Good teeth! Your Majesty,' exclaimed the Cardinal. 'And who in the world has any?'

This flattery made the King more than smile, for the Cardinal was proverbially known at Versailles for the beauty and soundness of his teeth. It goes without saying that the Court and the town were much amused at the little comedy.

But very impudent were the conduct and speech of the Marquis de Spinola. It was called a clever piece of flattery. Was it not rather a feat of coarse vanity more fitting a clown than a gentleman? At the birth of his grandson, the Duke of Burgundy, Louis XIV. was particularly happy at the prospect of a male line of descendants. Relaxing from the usual exigencies of rigid etiquette, to show the joy he felt at so auspicious an event, he had the portals of the Palace thrown widely open to the multitude, and many had then the privilege of kissing his hand. The crowd was pressing forward, and filing off before the Prince as rapidly as kissing hands allowed. Of the number of those who thus passed on was the Marquis de Spinola, the son of the well-known Spanish general. When his turn came, instead of merely kissing the hand, he bit the King's finger.

'Hay!' sharply exclaimed the King.

'I beg Your Majesty's pardon,' said Spinola, 'but had I not bitten Your Majesty, I should have passed unobserved.

XXV

LORD CHESTERFIELD AND THE CHATTERBOX

THAT nothing is more risky for a man than speaking ill of persons unknown to him to strangers, was never better exemplified than on one occasion in Paris.

At a large evening-party in one of the celebrated drawing-rooms of the St Germain Faubourg, Lord Chesterfield, who was one of the guests, was much courted. His accomplishments, as a thorough man of the world of fashion, made him a supreme authority in matters of good taste, and his conversation was prized beyond that of any courtier, because it was known to be equally refined, witty and weighty. His great experience of society, and the exceptional extent of his reading, gave him almost a unique ascendancy in social and literary gatherings, so that his approbation was eagerly sought, even in trifles.

A gentleman who knew him by repute, and saw him then for the first time, said to him, by way of entering into conversation, 'Did you ever see, sir, such a fright

as that broomstick-like woman in the corner? Who is she, I wonder?'

'She is my sister, sir,' replied Lord Chesterfield, frigidly.

'No, no,' said the gentleman, trying to recover himself, 'not the lady in blue, but the ugly, horse-headed woman in pink by her side.'

'She is my wife, sir,' answered the English nobleman, in a more frigid tone than before, to the great discomfiture of his unknown interlocutor, who sneaked gradually away, and soon vanished altogether.

The hero of this little adventure is also said to have been Lord North; but whether he, or Lord Chesterfield, gave the lesson of politeness just related does not in the least invalidate the moral.

If Lord Chesterfield was really the chief actor in the occurrence, he must have intended to bring a light-headed chatterer to a sense of propriety, regardless of accuracy in his answers, for Lady Chesterfield was, it appears, a handsome woman, and he could not very well have given her a certificate of ugliness. A sensitive advocate of the fitness of things, as he was, would probably hit upon the idea of a fictitious wife and a fictitious sister to make his talker sensible of the enormity of his indiscreet remarks.

XXVI

THE FRENCH TOURIST IN LONDON

THE Anglo-Saxon race is admired all the world over for its practical spirit. It is this solid quality which has enabled it to spread in all climes, and take root everywhere, as no other race ever did. It matters not what may be the difficulties or stumbling-blocks standing in his way, the Englishman will get over them by some means or other, and come out victorious in the end. If he starts for a colony, he will adapt himself to the climate, make the natives serviceable to him, find out the richest product the soil is susceptible of yielding, and become master of the situation. If he is a manufacturer, he will arrive at producing the best and cheapest article, after discovering a mechanical improvement equally simple and important, which his foreign competitor will be slow to adopt. If he is a merchant, he will find the best buying or selling market and beat the natives on their own ground. If he is a statesman, he will devise means of ruling suitable for his countrymen, or for this or that subjected race, however varied the requirements may be. Nothing is more striking than the numerous kinds of governments which have been con-

stituted throughout the British Empire. There are not two exactly alike; and yet they are, all and everyone of them, the best sort which could have been found in each case. The French—who are in many a field the rivals of England — may be excused if now and then they show a little jealousy of the English. Occasional want of success may dim their keen sense of vision. But there is one thing about the English which they immensely admire, and upon which they are every day expatiating in the most ungrudging and generous spirit, and that is—the practical sense so generally visible throughout the British community.

A Frenchman, who was visiting London for the first time, was walking to the South Kensington Museum. He had started from the Cannon Street Hotel, and had elected to walk instead of taking a conveyance, in order to see the streets, the shops and the people more leisurely. Not having much experience about London distances, he imagined, when he had walked for nearly an hour, that he must be very near his destination. He knew he was in the right direction, because he had consulted the plan of London, and had carefully kept to the main thoroughfares. Yet, in order to make quite sure of it, he ventured to inquire of a policeman, of whose urbanity he rightly entertained a high notion. The excellent bobby, not being a master of the mixed lingo which the polite Frenchman commanded, smiled broadly, but shook his head, saying, 'Don't understand what you mean, sir,' and moved on after touching his helmet.

The pedestrian soon addressed another agent of the force, and said as plainly and as loudly as he could, 'Soot Kongsinguetôn, please.'

The noble agent was not likely to guess what these curious sounds meant, and said, 'What, sir?'

The foreign gentleman, knowing these two words well, repeated his question once, twice, thrice, but by no mental effort, could the good policeman make out the

sense of the mysterious sentence. The inquirer thought the police altogether up to their reputation for their obliging ways, but he had misgivings about their intellectual power. When he had tried one more couple of policemen, with the same unsatisfactory result, he made up his mind to walk on until he could see the Albert Hall, or the Albert Memorial, which he had read was not far from the Museum. On his way he saw a 'sandwichman,' with a placard in large print:

'J. L. TOOLE.

'*Ici on parle Français.*'

A play in which the famous comic actor was then taking part.

'Oh, these English!' exclaimed the foreign visitor, with irrepressible delight. 'Oh, these English! How practical they are! They actually have perambulating interpreters!'

'Mr Toole,' said he, in French, raising his hat to the 'sandwichman,' 'Mr Toole, would you have the kindness to tell me where is Soot Kongsinguetôn?'

'Go to Jericho!' replied the low-born Briton. 'No gammon with me!'

Great was the surprise of the tourist to find that the right board had been put on the wrong man! To make such a blunder was hardly in keeping with the fame of the English for business habits.

XXVII

THE FLUTE

WHO will succeed in describing the irresistible charm of music?—the most abundant, extensive and varied of all languages. There is no necessity to resort to an impossible analysis to appreciate the full power of that art. We all have felt its potency and been enthralled by it. Göthe said that music is the easiest of arts to acquire, and the one that will produce the most stirring effects by the simplest means. And it is undoubtedly so. It is an occupation during our leisure time, a comfort in sorrow, a repose in fatigue, a distraction in weariness; it appeases anger; it cheers the sad heart. These are sweet boons, but it confers more precious benefits still. It more than anything—more than education itself—contributes to the softening of manners and customs, to the brotherly feeling which should unite men with one another, to the creation of strong sympathies, and by its influence becomes a pro-

digious agent of civilisation. How could one fully define that marvellous art—at once mysterious, yet manifest; at once national, yet universal in its effects—which moves and carries the soul to ethereal regions? It unites a whole nation in one sentiment. It unites the whole of mankind in one emotion. Well could Plato say that 'Music is divine in its origin and its end.' And a Chinese philosopher expressed the same thought by saying that 'Music connects the earth with the heavens.' It rules all men, whatever their inclinations. To the pious it is like the perfume of prayer, to the warrior it is the voice of his country, to the lover it is the language of his rapture, to the poet the dream of his imagination, to the thinker supernatural communion with the unknown. To each one it paints, in turn, all feelings, all sensations, all thoughts, all reveries, all passions, however varied and opposite. It is the most spiritualising of all arts. Addressing every one of our faculties, it affects them through what is most intimate within us. Remaining indefinite and vague, it yet gives utterance to every emotion. It will soothe pain and excite joy, and between these two extremes will bestow blessings with lavish hand. 'There is,' said George Sand, 'no mightier art than this to awaken in man the sublime consciousness of his own humanity, to paint before the mind's eye the rich splendours of nature, the joy of meditation, the national character of a people, the passionate tumult of their hopes and fears, the languor and despondency of their sufferings.' Remorse, violence, terror, control, despair, enthusiasm, faith, disquietude, glory, calm—these, and a thousand other nameless emotions, belong to music. Without stooping to a childish imitation of noises and effects, she transports us in spirit to strange and distant scenes. There we wander to and fro in dim air, like Æneas in the Elysian fields. All we behold is greater than on earth—godlike, changed, idealised.

Being such in its elements, power and effects, music

could develop only in a highly-civilised society. The Greeks, great as they were, and understanding the capabilities of music as they did, could neither arrive at its complete cultivation, nor apprehend the fulness of its scope. They were too rational, not emotional enough; too imperfectly humanised as yet, to carry music beyond its second stage. Their religion also was too earthly to inspire them with sublime melodies. Instruments were likewise too primitive to permit of their attaining the divine excellence realised by the moderns. Yet, for all that, they were grand even in that art. The Delphian hymn, lately discovered, reveals a simple majesty that we were, until now, far from suspecting. The progress reached as early as the fourth century B.C. explains the attractions which the art offered to the greatest minds. For, if Alexander felt captivated enough by the loveliness of music to study it with fervour, it must, indeed, have thus early possessed a very delightful fascination. But it must be owned that practical minds generally held it little worthy of serious men's time, application and thought. We see this in the following.

One of the shrewdest men of antiquity, Philip of Macedonia, used to declare, speaking of musicians, that he preferred the nightingale to its imitators, a proof that he at least appreciated natural music. In this he showed more taste than Charles X. of France, who once said, in reply to someone asking him whether he liked the musical art, 'I am not fond of unpleasant noise!'

What would the French King have thought of our contemporary princes, all of whom, without exception, delight in musical entertainments, and some of whom also study the art of Euterpe and Terpsichore, and become proficient artists? It is probable that he despised Frederick the Great for his love of the flute.

Philip's son, Alexander, whose education, conducted by Aristotle, was so complete and admirable, was as genuine an admirer of the arts as Pericles himself had

been. Not only did he understand and love architecture, sculpture and painting, but he learnt music, and practised on the flute until he was equal to his teachers. His father, who heard him play, was so struck by his son's performance one day, that, as a practical ruler, he thought it advisable to check the musical taste of the young prince, lest the art he studied should become an engrossing pastime and passion and conduce to his neglect of regal duties.

'Are you not ashamed, Alexander,' he sternly said, 'to play so well? You should know that it does not befit the dignity of a king to bestow too much time and attention on an idle occupation. It is well that a ruler should encourage those who have proficiency in art; he may also listen to musicians for relaxation, but he does them sufficient honour by so doing, and the leader of men must not descend to the level of the leader of choirs. Remember the great Themistocles's answer: "No, I do not play the flute," he said, "but I can destroy fleets and save and build cities."'

After this paternal rebuke, Alexander pursued the art no longer, and gave all his time to the study of poetry, philosophy, history, science, government and war.

A lesson worthy of a king this, and good for all kings to learn and remember! Yet, even such a lesson ought to leave unfettered that art which is beyond all others infinite as a language, and at the same time an inexhaustible source of constant delight. Music is essentially a modern art. Ancient times were not ripe for its growth. That the nightingale's song should have appeared to Agesilaus and Philip superior to the human voice and musical harmony, shows that music, in their time, was in its infancy. The nightingale's rich and enchanting strains are farther from human melodies than the flute is from the organ.

XXVIII

CALUMNY AND ITS ROYAL VICTIM

As a tempest brings to the surface of the ocean the slime of its depths, so a revolution often raises from the lower layers of society the worst characters that can disgrace humanity. This was the case during a phase of the French Revolution—at the climax of its violence. The Terror which lasted fourteen months, is, by some writers, represented as constituting the Revolution, whereas it was a passing hurricane, and must not be identified with the mighty social and political change itself.

Carlyle is mainly responsible for this misconception. His work on the tremendous upheaval is only a gallery of tragic pictures—historically true so far as they are real episodes in the political drama that was being enacted—but inadequate to present a narration of the convulsion. It gives us no more idea of the causes, bearings, importance, and consequences of the prominent series of events as a whole, than the exhibition of repelling monsters cast on the sea shore, gives us a notion of the life that is teeming in the depth of the ocean. In his judgment the Revolution is synonymous with evil,

because it cost the lives of many victims. Yet, he passes no such wholesale condemnation on the Cromwellian Revolution, which cost as much blood for liberty, nor on the wars of his hero, Frederick, the death-roll of which was, for mere conquest, be it remembered, hardly ever exceeded. It is rather inconsistent to say the least.

Who can gather from Carlyle's account the iniquities which the French Revolution swept away; the folly of monarchy, which brought about new necessities and forced a succession of unavoidable events; the political social, legislative, commercial, financial improvements which the Revolution carried out, and which resulted in the prosperity and welfare of a nation?

Looking at the France of 1788 and at the France of 1888, what difference do we see? The first, abjectly poor, miserable, mortified, trampled upon, suffering every kind of vexation and trial, embittered by all sorts of wrongs—a nation, weak, humiliated and bleeding. The second France, rich, cheerful, refreshed, content, regenerated, enjoying equality of rights—a nation, at once strong, respected and imposing. The Revolution brought in that transformation, and of that transformation Carlyle gives us no conception. He expresses nothing but loathing for the movement—contempt unmitigated. Instead of sympathy for 'a people struggling to be free,' we have sarcasm for the actors, derision for the proceedings, disparagement of the change. Sentimental pity blinds the historian. He sees a scaffold and its victims—he sees not the dawn of a new era, nor the millions who bless the rise of the sun. He shows a hideous populace—he shows not the heroic multitude that fight for freedom to the death. He paints the destruction—he paints not the re-construction. He weeps over the violence—he hails not the triumph of justice. He, the advocate of force when Cromwell and Frederick use it, will not admit the use of force for the emancipation of a great

people. Did he expect liberty to blossom like a rose and work itself out without travail? Victories are not won without battles.

The fact is, the pretended seer is not only myopic, but squints besides, and the coat of prejudice that covers his glasses distorts his vision the more. Wholly engrossed with his own oracular wisdom, he mistakes the genius of a gifted nation for frivolous imbecility, irreclaimable baseness and foul savagery. Too great are some sages in their own eyes to condescend to make themselves acquainted with facts, and study them. Above events they stand, and detraction will pass for judgment. The time for disputing about the good which the Revolution undoubtedly inaugurated is passed. We, who view the struggle from afar, can distinguish the right and the wrong. Never was so much good wrought in so few years—never were so many wrongs perpetrated to secure it.

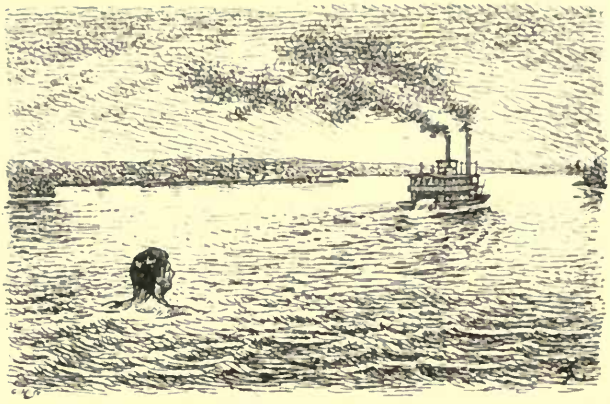
Like historians, we deplore the bloodshed, and hate tyrants. With them we shed tears over the massacre of the innocent, and vow execration to their executioners. No human being would be at variance with them on that ground. Pity moves us all to the core for the noble men and women whose cruel and useless death dishonours the cause of the transient victors. When these heartless rulers of one day, in their turn mount the scaffold, we feel no regret to see them punished, whereas we still remember their victims with veneration. Of these victims none excites our admiration and grief more than the beautiful queen, whose only crime was sovereignty, and whose only fault was her love for her husband.

It has been said, with much truth it appears to us, that good nature is the distinct quality of character of the House of Austria, and that Marie Antoinette was serious and stately in public functions in proportion as she was playful, merry, light-hearted, witty and sweet

within her intimate circle. Her coldness, arising from timidity in solemn celebrations, but mistaken for un-unbending pride, caused her to be called The Austrian, then Madame Deficit, then Madame Veto. The calumny about the famous Necklace Scandal, studiously spread by the enemies of the Court, had robbed her of all her previous popularity. After the false accusation which this affair generated, a mere outcry, clap-trap, were likely to excite hatred, unchain passions, and finally bring on her destruction. A legend, with a view to discredit her and increase popular animosity, was unscrupulously invented, and furnished the rabble with a cry.

In the severe winter following the bad harvest that occurred at the outset of the Revolution, a famine prevailed in France. This naturally increased the misery of the poorer population. The people of Paris suffered most owing to the want of work and the vice of the Fiscal System. A wicked story, the origin of which has been traced to Fouquier-Tinville, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Tribunal, was mongered everywhere by the demagogues. It was related that, when some one had reported to Marie Antoinette that the poor had no bread to eat, she had exclaimed, 'And why do they not eat cake, then?' This tale, which the former sprightly liveliness of the Queen tended to make credible, was spread among the lower classes of Paris to infuriate them against royalty. It did not, by itself, cause the Queen's misfortunes, but it no doubt intensified the deep hatred which had been aroused against 'The Austrian' by her baneful advice to the King at the break of the political earthquake.

When she perished on the scaffold, with that dignified heroism which has gained the respectful sympathy of the whole world, the wretched tale was being repeated with callous resentment, and her death seemed to many a just retribution of her heartlessness. To such lengths go political passions.



XXIX

THE MISSISSIPPI SWIMMER

AMERICAN writers of the playful kind, before and after the time of Artemus Ward, have always been numerous, and have, on both sides of the Atlantic, deservedly enjoyed popularity for their humour and wit. They have been the first to observe and paint the curious characteristics of their own countrymen; and had Dickens never gone to the New World, it is probable that American pens would themselves have described just those features with which the great English novelist has made us familiar. Exaggeration there is—perhaps too much of it—in all these photographic snips; the exact lineaments are enlarged or dwarfed out of proportion, often blurred by grotesqueness, no doubt; but still, the defects of the picture never rob its original of all recognition, and, if the sketch is a caricature—as it is meant—it is at least one which is exempt from malice. Good-natured satires they are at all times, and at all times their very exaggeration evokes additional amusement. There are endless tales of the kind just alluded to. As a specimen of the type, we may reproduce the following,

At a large refreshment bar in New Orleans a crowd

of men were smoking and were relating, with great animation, more or less marvellous occurrences, some of which they had heard, some of which they had witnessed. One had known of a pedestrian who covered a thousand miles in ten days. Another had seen Blondin crossing the Niagara Falls on a tight rope, with his legs in a sack. A third had ventured to accompany an aeronaut across America, but had been carried over the sea by an adverse wind current. They were both saved by a barque, close by which they determined to come down at all risks.

'I had a brother,' said another speaker, 'who was a first-class swimmer, and who, like you, volunteered to go up in a balloon. He also was carried over the ocean, but when he saw the wind likely to last, he let himself fall into the water and swam ashore, long after land had been lost sight of. He reckoned he swam over forty-six miles. His companion was never found.'

'Well,' another man said, 'as to swimming, I will tell you what I saw a week ago. I was coming down here on board one of the large Mississippi boats, when, while we were stopping at Memphis, to leave and take passengers and cargo, a swimmer passed along, going down stream at a splendid rate. An hour and a quarter later we overtook that same swimmer, and we *were* surprised, for we thought he must have gone ashore long ago. We stopped opposite Helena, and we were rather startled by seeing the man coming down on his back, and propelling himself swiftly with his legs. He once more took the lead of us, but we passed him again, however, before we got to Coahoma. But whilst we were at that station, he came on again, and once more went a long way in front of our boat. We soon overtook him, you guess, and arrived at Napoleon. Then there were bets as to whether he could again pass us, and we looked out. Within ten minutes we saw a black speck bobbing up

and down in the water, and very soon there was the swimmer shooting by only fifty yards from us. Once more we steamed by him, and, as we passed, the captain shouted to him through his speaking horn, "Will you come aboard?"

'We heard him shout in reply, "No, thanks!"

'"Where are you going to?" roared the captain.

'We heard, "Vicksburg!" and he turned on his back by way of taking it easy.

'I can tell you, sirs, we were astonished. Some passengers told of grand swimming feats, but they owned they had never seen the like of this. He must have covered upwards of two hundred miles. What do you think of that in the way of swimming?' ended the speaker with the look of a record-breaker.

The outbursts of 'By Jove!' and 'By Jabers!' in curious diversity of tones, from shrill *falsetto* to guttural *profondo*, showed that the story was appreciated, and interpreted in various degrees of credulity. And from all sides the traveller was pelted with a hubbub of questions, 'Did he take tea on the way?' 'Did he fast all the time?' 'Had he provisions?' 'Did he catch fish to feed on?' 'Did he drink champagne?' But the traveller was spared the necessity and ordeal of replying by a smoker in the company, who loudly asked with an unmistakable twang, 'Stranger, did you see the swimmer's face? Would you know him again?'

'No, sir,' replied the previous speaker; 'he was always too far from the boat for us to see his features.'

'Well, then,' rejoined the inquirer, 'look at me. I was the man!'

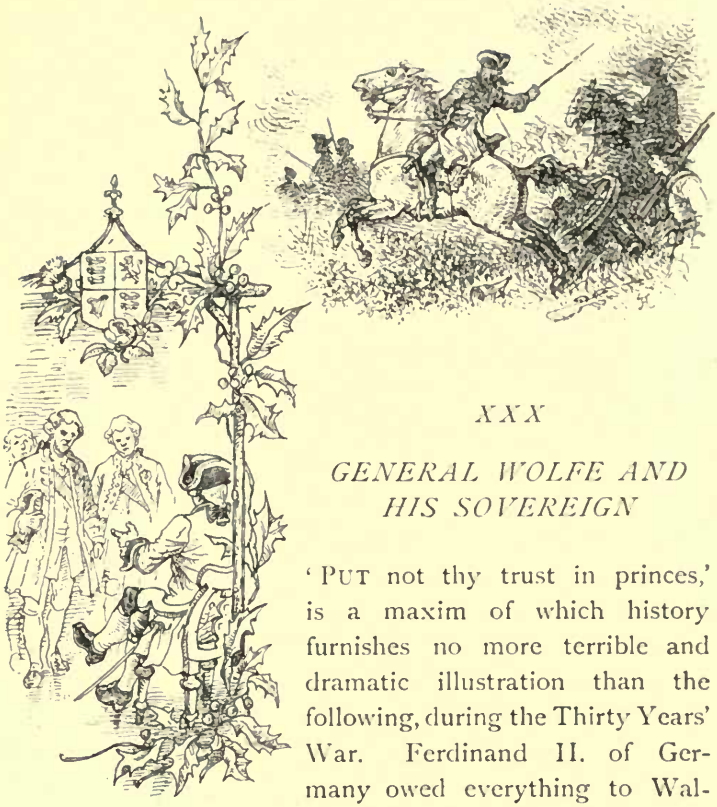
Staring eyes and gaping mouths greeted this statement, and of all those present the boat passenger stared and gaped most.

'Yes,' continued the unknown hero, with volubility, 'I was at New Madrid, and had to come to New Orleans

for pressing business. I had only half a dollar left, so I sent my clothes by despatch boat to Vicksburg, where I had money waiting for me; and, not being a bad swimmer, I guessed I had better swim it, and I did, as you see. But, as I do not want what they call an ovation, gentlemen, I'll bid you all good-night!'

Short as his tale was, it amazed the company still more than that of the steamboat man. And when the latter, proud of his success, had hurriedly strutted out of the bar, possibly to avoid complications, one of the company exclaimed, 'Well, I guess we know men of truth when we see them, gentlemen! I wonder whether those two could tell a story?'

'Ah!' replied one, 'they could if they'd only try, you bet!'



XXX

GENERAL WOLFE AND HIS SOVEREIGN

'PUT not thy trust in princes,' is a maxim of which history furnishes no more terrible and dramatic illustration than the following, during the Thirty Years' War. Ferdinand II. of Germany owed everything to Wallenstein—endless resources, enthusiastic armies, glorious victories, the success of his baneful policy; nay, the security of his power and even of his crown — and he repaid the great captain with exile! But when the heroic Gustavus Adolphus had swooped upon the Empire, routed its commanders, reconquered North Germany, Franconia, the Palatinate, and carried Munich, while his Saxon allies were marching upon Vienna, the Emperor Ferdinand II., at bay, implored Wallenstein to come to his assistance. The great leader, by the magic of his name, raised new armies, and having resumed the supreme command, he secured the Empire from further defeats by crushing the Saxons and facing Gustavus, who was killed at Lutzen. It was then that the Emperor gave an instance of his gratitude to the

man who had twice saved him. He had Wallenstein murdered! After this deed of princely wisdom, the Imperial power collapsed when it was attacked by Condé, whose sword finally saved the Reformed Kingdoms and assured the existence of Protestantism.

If, however, the precept quoted above often proves true, it admits of striking exceptions. We find a beautiful exception, for example, in the dignity and justice displayed by Philip II.—who was an exacting master—after the loss of his Armada. For, when the Duke of Medina-Sidonia, who commanded the grand Expedition, carried the news of the disaster to his master, the King said, with royal composure, 'My Lord Duke, I can bear you no ill-will, for I sent you to conquer England—not a tempest.'

In truth, whatever the opponents of monarchy may say, princes, by the nature of their education—not to speak of their inherited qualities—are almost always good and benevolent. We have only to look around us and see the numerous members of sovereign houses to become convinced of that fact. Abundant evidence of it could be gathered from all sides. In no circumstance, as a rule, are princes more ready to be just and evince gratitude than in the defence of their friends and servants. A good instance refers to George II.

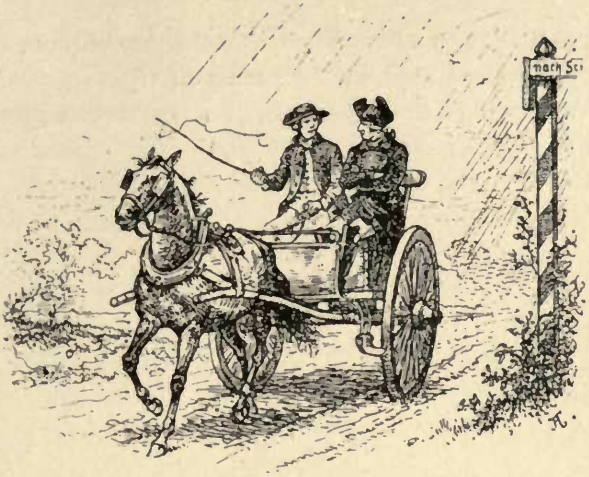
General Wolfe, of Canadian celebrity, had many enemies at Court. His heroic successes in the field were not very palatable to stay-at-home nonentities The king once overheard some of his courtiers speaking ill of the General, and joining the group in conversation, he asked, 'What, gentlemen, are you saying of General Wolfe?'

'We are saying, Your Majesty,' said one of the noblemen, 'that he is an enraged madman.'

'If this be the case, then,' said the king, 'I should uncommonly like him to bite some of my other generals,

and yourselves, gentlemen, into the bargain, for I am sadly in want of madmen of his kind.'

If this rejoinder did not produce great commanders, it arrested the animosity of Wolfe's jealous enemies, and showed that princes are not forgetful of what their subjects do for their greatness.



XXXI

ROYAL FARE

THE Emperor Joseph II., who had very simple habits, often indulged in solitary walks in the neighbourhood of Vienna. One morning he had gone a few miles from town when it threatened to rain; he therefore turned back and briskly stepped homewards. In a few minutes, a gig, driven towards the city by a gentleman, overtook him. This gentleman slackened the pace of his horse upon observing the respectable looks of the pedestrian, and asked him whether he would not accept a seat in his vehicle. The Emperor accepted, and after thanking the stranger for his courtesy, took a seat by his side.

The horse resumed its trot, and its driver — whose jovial face revealed a particularly pleasant humour and talkative mood — said playfully to his companion, 'Ah, sir, I had such a breakfast this morning, that you no doubt would be glad to make one like it every day of your life. It was a real treat!'

'What, then, did you have?' the Emperor asked.

'Ah! that is the question,' said the driver, smiling. 'Now, my dear sir, suppose you try to guess.'

'Well, you had, perhaps, an omelet with fine herbs?'

'Guess again, sir.'

'Well, then, mutton cutlets with mushrooms, perhaps?'

'Something better. Guess again.'

'Well, a roasted chicken?'

'Better, better still.'

'Partridges, then?'

'Better still. Guess on, please.'

'A truffled turkey?'

'No, still better. Guess again.'

'Ortolans?'

'Sir, you must guess again.'

'I must give it up,' said the Emperor.

'Well, then, my dear sir, I had a pheasant, shot on His Majesty's preserves,' triumphantly replied the amiable citizen.

'Indeed!' said the Emperor. And he added, smiling, 'But that is a grave case of poaching, and I might have you taken up for it, sir.'

'You! my dear sir. And who are you?'

'It is your turn to guess now, sir.'

'I see by your overcoat that you belong to the army?

'Yes, but guess in what capacity.

'You are a captain in the Guards, perhaps?'

'Oh! higher than that.'

'You are a major?'

'Higher than that. Guess on.'

'Well, then, a colonel?'

'Better than that. Go on.'

'Perhaps your honour is a general?'

'A little higher still. Guess again, please.'

'Would your honour be a field-marshal? the driver asked, rather anxiously.

'Better than that. Guess on.'

'Then your excellency must be an Archduke?' stuttered the gentleman, getting very uneasy.

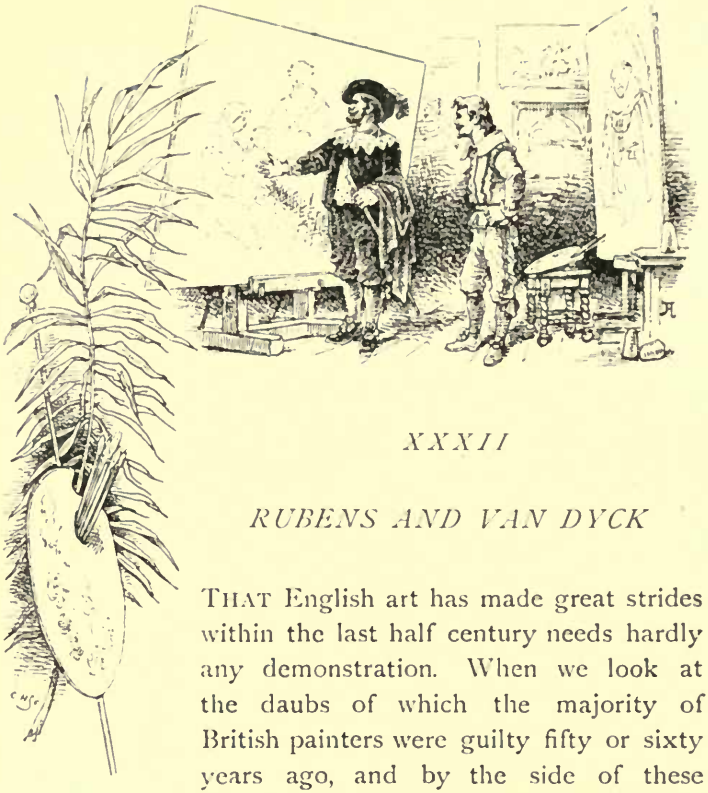
'Better than that, my dear sir. Guess on.'

'Then I cannot guess—unless,' he added, with great trepidation, 'you are the Emperor himself.'

'I am,' answered the sovereign. Then, unbuttoning his overcoat, he uncovered a star of the highest order.

The worthy Viennese, struck dumb, tried to glide down upon his knees to show respect to his Kaiser; but the Emperor took him by the hand and compelled him to resume his seat, saying, in a merry tone, 'My dear sir, you have breakfasted at my expense this morning, and, since you are fond of pheasant, you shall dine at my expense again this afternoon, if you will drive me to the Palace, and be my guest; for I shall be delighted to share with you another pheasant, also killed on the Imperial preserves.'

The happy Viennese of course accepted this kind invitation, and his moistened eyes testified to the mixed feelings of gratitude and pleasure he was experiencing.



XXXII

RUBENS AND VAN DYCK

THAT English art has made great strides within the last half century needs hardly any demonstration. When we look at the daubs of which the majority of British painters were guilty fifty or sixty years ago, and by the side of these we see the works that are produced every year by the numerous masters and students of the present day we find it difficult to believe that they belong to the same country. Even now, though draughtsmanship is vastly superior to what it was, yet it has not reached general excellence, and it still remains the comparative weakness of the British school. This relative deficiency may be ascribed almost entirely to the process of training which obtains in England, and which is so different from that found abroad. Abroad, a great painter, a great sculptor makes his studio a school open to all comers, and numerous pupils flock to it; so that, besides the benefit derived from public art schools, students have the advantage of working under the master's eye, of receiving his daily advice, and of watching his own manner of handling pencil and brush. Under such conditions pro-

ficiency is more rapid and more thorough. In England, great masters do not care to adopt this system The foreign mode of training seems to have originated in Italy four hundred years ago, and has continued ever since. It had another advantage, greater formerly than now: it was useful to the master himself. The master was often assisted by his pupils in finishing works of immense proportions. Promising pupils were entrusted with the task of painting the background, the draperies and the shadows. That explains the extraordinary number of productions which an old master was able to accomplish.

The first thing that strikes a visitor, say, to the Palazzo Vecchio at Venice, is the astonishing amount of work that was done by Tintoretto. One wonders how a man's lifetime could have sufficed to conceive, to draw, to paint this or that superb canvas, covering a surface of hundreds of feet. A single painting of his may measure 50 feet by 25, and contain perhaps four or five hundred personages, besides grand architectural details. There may be fifty separate great works in the same gallery. And this is only a portion of his labours. Everywhere in Europe, but in Italian cities especially, one finds pictures of large dimensions magnificently executed by the same master. We should be unable to imagine how these countless masterpieces could have been the creation of one artist, unless we knew that he was surrounded by a band of devoted pupils. These filled up blank spaces left in the work, as soon as the master had done what he considered necessary. Yet, when this is understood, it is still marvellous that any one man, even a man of high genius, should have been able to treat so large a number of subjects on such a scale.

Take a picture. He had to meditate upon the conception, upon the composition, the general effect, the grouping, the costumes, the physiognomy of each personage—often a portrait—and so forth. Then he had to sketch the whole. Then he had to paint the heads, the

faces, the hands, the feet, the chief light effects, the sky, and the flexures of the draperies. When his pupils had done their share, he would return and add hundreds of touches.

In fact, the artist had acquired such mastery over each part of his art that he drew and painted with amazing rapidity. There were masters who used the brush from the first, and painted straight away without any sketching. All this explains much; but what about time? If we reflect that our present masters can do no more than one, two or three fair-sized pictures, and perhaps a few smaller pieces besides, in a year, well may we ask how the old masters managed to cover more numerous and far more extensive surfaces of canvas.

On this point we find a satisfactory explanation. A day, in olden times, was wholly given up to work. As a rule, a great painter had a residence, and an allowance offered him by a prince or a corporation, and was not disturbed or distressed by the necessity of earning his daily bread, so that he devoted his energies and time exclusively to his art. He was, besides, as free from social engagements as he chose, and 'society' made no demand on his time. Nowadays, the artist has to waste precious days in order to meet the exigencies of his social position. He has, besides, to face the necessities of life, which are infinitely more expensive and varied than formerly.

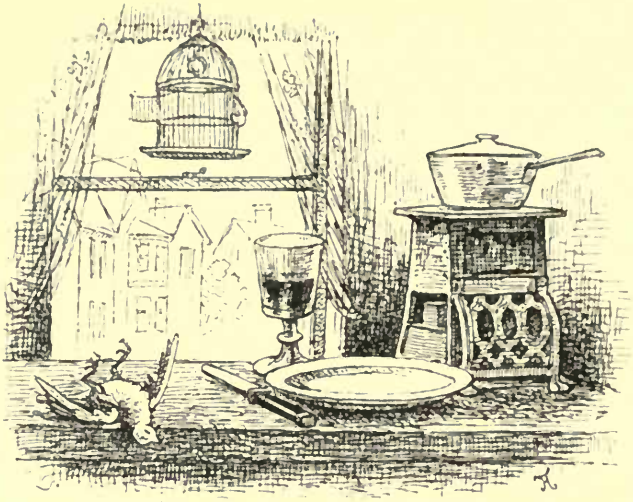
This enables us to see that the halcyon days of art are necessarily over, nevermore to return. We may tell a pretty little story about the golden days of old, which illustrates one of the features we have endeavoured to describe.

Once Rubens left his studio for a few days in order to visit a friend in the country, leaving on the easel, several unfinished paintings, for a master would frequently commence four or six works at a time. This was Rubens's way, oftener than was advisable, and it accounts for so

many paintings of his that are unsatisfactory. His imagination was so prolific that, after beginning a subject, a new fancy would seize hold of him and he would dash into a new composition, leaving on one side a previous painting, and taking his chance of finishing it as best he could later on. Sometimes the unfinished work was laid by altogether, or it was finished by a more or less advanced pupil. During Rubens's absence on the occasion referred to, Van Dyck, who was then under his training, took it into his head to complete one of the unfinished pictures, and this he accomplished to his satisfaction. In due course the great Flemish master came home, and, upon seeing how things stood in his studio, he noticed the picture finished by Van Dyck.

'Ho!' he said, 'I was under the impression I had left this unfinished; but, upon my faith, it does not want another touch, and it is by no means the worst canvas I have painted in my life!'

From that time Van Dyck was the rival of Rubens, for the world thus early endorsed the judgment of the master about his pupil. And, in truth, most people, looking at the splendid works of Van Dyck and the best works of Rubens, would be puzzled if they had to declare which present the highest qualities of excellence.



XXXIII

AUNTIE'S CANARY

THE writer of this collection can vouch for the truth of the following story. A friend of his had a very wealthy aunt, who was known for the oddity of her old-maidish ways, and the sincerity of her love of money. She lived a very retired life, and her seclusion had, in her eyes, the double charm of sparing her resources both in the renewal of her wardrobe and the return of invitations. Her table was as scanty as that of a sparrow. Her nephew was immensely amused at the manner in which she husbanded her fortune, and hoarded the accumulated interest of her property.

'She is the most marvellous steward the world ever saw,' he used to say, with the good humour that an heir, gifted with patience as he was, might legitimately evince at the thought of a rich harvest.

As he was as attentive to her as she was herself to her goods and chattels, he often spent an hour with her, and he always found her in the same equable mood, for she was not a woman likely to shorten

her existence by anything that might happen outside her house. Scarcity, epidemics, war might rage; calamities, disasters, catastrophes, might take place; heartrending miseries might be brought to her notice—she remained placid and unconcerned, for, as she said, 'My dear, if we were to lament and cry over all that happens in the world we should have nothing else to do.'

Once her nephew made his dutiful visit to the dear old thing, and, to his amazement, he for once found her in grief. He could see she had shed tears.

'Aunt, what is the matter?' he inquired, with visible concern.

'Oh! Ernest,' she replied, with a sad sigh, followed by sobs and tears as she proceeded, 'my dear little canary is dead!'

'What? Your canary is gone, Aunt?'

'Gone! Yes, it died yesterday. I had it for eleven years, and I attended to it every day. It was the sole thing I had in the world to care for—and it is dead! . . .'

'Oh, aunt! I *am* sorry! You must have another.'

'No, Ernest, I could not have another. Besides, if I had another, I might again become attached to it; and then, if it died, it would be another parting. No; let it be.'

'Well, then, Aunt, since you will have no more, let me have the little bird, and I shall have it stuffed for you, and we'll put it in its cage.'

'We cannot do that. I wish I had thought of it!

'Why not? Have you buried it?'

'No.'

'Surely you have not given it to the cat next door?'

'No; I have eaten it at dinner to-day!'

Ernest was staggered.

'Was it good?' he gasped.

'It was a little thin and tough, but it made up just a meal.'

His aunt had had the courage to pluck her little favourite, to throw its pretty feathers in the dust hole, to truss it, to fry it, to eat it, to crunch its little bones, and to season them with her tears. The ways of misers, as Ernest said, are unfathomable.

XXXIV

THIEVES

In former days thieves were undoubtedly more prosperous than they now are. The malefactors of previous generations easily escaped punishment—at least, for a longer time than at present—because they generally were gifted with sharper wits than the community at large, and they could prey upon it with comparative safety. In our day, things are exactly reversed; people are far more shrewd and wide-awake than they were, whilst evil-doers, springing, as they commonly do, from the lowest dregs of society, are no match either for the police or for ordinary men. Some robberies are now and then committed in our midst which, for daring and ingenuity, beat past records, it is true, but these are relatively rare, and they seldom escape speedy retribution. It may safely be said, that crime has been decreasing as steadily as enlightenment has spread, and that malefactors have greatly diminished in number. There are ancient feats of robbery on record that are clever and curious enough to find a place here. In some, the thief suffered immediate punishment; in others, the thief made good his escape through superior craftiness.

Zenon (of Citium) was robbed by a slave of his, and the latter, upon being convicted, tried, in extenuation of his theft and to escape chastisement, to use an argument in harmony, as he thought, with the doctrine of his Stoic master.

'The Fates have decreed that I should steal,' he pleaded.

'And also that thou shouldst be punished,' replied Zenon; and the penalty was inflicted accordingly.

A thief who had stolen some money from the priest of his own parish, went to confession to his victim and accused himself of the robbery, without naming the sufferer of it. 'And Father,' he ended, 'what am I to do?'

'You must return the money,' replied the priest, who had not as yet detected the theft.

'Here it is, Father,' said the thief.

'Not to me.'

'Who to, then, Father?'

'To him from whom you have stolen it.'

'He will not take it back, Father,' rejoined the thief.

'Then, in that case, you may keep it.' The pious thief went away with the money, and with a relieved conscience into the bargain.

A fashionable gentleman was taking a walk, not far from his own mansion, when he was approached from a side street by a very lame mendicant, who begged for alms in a piteous manner. From the other side of the street there appeared a man, who hurriedly said, 'Do not give him a farthing, my lord, the rascal is not lame at all, and if you only give me your cane I will thrash the vagabond for you and make him run.'

'Right!' said the gentleman, handing his stick. 'Go in for him!'

'Here goes!' the two men roared with one voice, and they both ran away together with the gold-headed cane.

There is an old story, well known to the previous generation, and, it seems, founded on fact, which is rather amusing. A man was returning from market with the money which his pigs had fetched, when he was suddenly stopped by a highwayman, who, pistol in hand, ordered him to stand and deliver. The farmer, all in a tremble, vowed that he was a poor man and had no money.

'Nonsense,' said the robber, 'I have seen you sell your pigs, and receive a price for them, with my own eyes, so you had better give me your money-bag at once, or else I will shoot you dead and take it afterwards.'

The farmer, whining and crying, pulled the bag out of his pocket and handed it to the highwayman. When this painful parting was over, he whined more lamentably than before, vowed that his wife and children must now starve, and that he had better die at once himself.

'My pigs,' he added, 'were our only resource to pay the landlord and buy food, and now that I have nothing to take home I don't want to live another hour! You had better put a bullet into my head as a charity.'

'My dear man,' said the robber, 'I don't want to have your blood on my conscience now that I have your money.'

'Oh, do kill me!' said the despairing countryman, visibly grown frantic with sorrow. 'Do kill me; don't be afraid!'

'Not I, man,' answered the malefactor.

'Then, dear Mr Highwayman, at least let me do it myself. Lend me your pistol to blow out my brains. I won't live another minute. I can't face my family without money. Do give me the pistol; that is the only thing I want for my bag. You can't deny it to a poor beggar tired of life. My blood won't be on your head. So, do give me your pistol, or else, for charity's sake, kill me yourself. Do it, do it like a good man!'

'Well, then,' rejoined the thief, 'since it is your will, here is the weapon. Be quick!'

The farmer grasped the pistol, cocked it, and at once, pointing it to the robber's head, shouted, full of energy, 'Now, stand and deliver, you vagabond, or I lay you dead this second!' He was so full of menace and resolution that the suddenly terrified highwayman threw down the bag of money without demurring. But the farmer, still aiming at him, and with fury depicted in his countenance, added, 'And now, rascal, I'll blow your brains out and kill you like a dog if you do not empty your pockets besides—and quickly, too!'

The robber, caught in his own trap, saw such determination in the fiery eyes of the armed man, that he emptied his pockets and threw their contents at his feet—expostulating, however, to be permitted to keep at least his own for himself.

'No; you shall be punished, you rascally thief! This money of yours will go to the poor-box of the parish. Now, lie down at full length, while I pick up my bag and your money. Lie on the ground at once, I say, or I fire; and if you attempt to stir until I allow you, you are a dead man.' The robber lay down as he was bidden; and when the farmer had secured his money and prize, 'Now, you get up, and walk in front of me in the direction I am going. I'll keep within a couple of yards behind you, and if you try to run I'll put a bullet in your spine. Now then, go on!'

The crestfallen robber, thoroughly overmatched and subdued, punctually obeyed his former victim, and was marched to the village, where the police took charge of him.

XXXV

FLATTERY

Low adulation is justly held unworthy. There are, however, examples or forms of flattery well deserving admiration, not because they convey adulation as such, but because they express a fit compliment in felicitous, concise and witty terms. Such speeches should possess another sort of charm; not only should they be spoken on the spur of the moment, but it is essential they should have the double quality of fitness and truth. If the French, as is often said, possess the faculty of ready speech to a conspicuous degree, it must be due to the long-standing intercourse they have had with one another since the reign of Francis I. This prince was the first who encouraged the daily presence of ladies in the Court circle. This change of customs at once improved sociability. It led to *obligatory* conversation, so to speak, and to that politeness, refinement and liveliness of speech, for which our neighbours have been distinguished for so many generations. Be this the true

cause or not, it is certain that no nation excels them in the art of spontaneously and aptly turning a piece of flattery into acceptable praise, exempt alike from exaggeration and meanness, and equally creditable to the speaker and to the recipient.

Of this kind was the reply of La Salle to Würmser, on a particular occasion. The Austrian commander, who had taken La Salle in action, asked him what age was Bonaparte, the victor of so many battles in Italy.

'The age,' replied the French General, 'Scipio was when he vanquished Hannibal.'

The aged Marshal, much flattered to be thus compared with the most famous captain of antiquity, immediately liberated his prisoner on parole.

Equally noteworthy was Racine's answer to Louis XIV., just after one of the Flemish campaigns.

'What was the cause of your absence during the last campaign?' inquired the King. 'I made you and Boileau my historiographers, and neither he nor you were with me in Flanders.'

'The fortresses you attacked, Sire,' replied Racine, 'were taken by Your Majesty in less time than was needful to have our outfits ready.'

The Cardinal de Retz, who had fought in the Fronde against Louis XIV.'s Government in the beginning of the reign, naturally incurred the King's anger, and after escaping from prison lived in exile and oblivion for a long time, away from the Court and royal sunshine. When, by the exertion of his friends, he was at last pardoned, he repaired to Versailles to lay at the foot of the throne the humblest expressions of submission and gratitude to the King. Coming into the royal presence, he fell on his knees, and waited for the King to speak a kindly word.

'Your hair has become white, sir Cardinal,' said the Prince to him in a gentle tone.

'People,' replied the once powerful mover of civil war, 'people easily grow old, Sire, when they have the misfortune of living under Your Majesty's displeasure.'

Of a different order, though not unbecoming, was the ready reply of a French philosopher to the Dowager-Empress of Germany.

'People,' said the Empress, 'declare the Queen of Sweden the most beautiful princess in the world. You, Mr de Maupertuis, who have seen her so often, can tell us if she really is?'

'I thought her so until to-day, Madam,' answered Maupertuis.

'My Lord Marquis,' said Louis XIV. to M. de Bièvre, 'you are reckoned one of our best wits, and I have enjoyed your lively *jeux de mots* — even your puns — about every one at Court, many persons being thereby indebted to you for a certain celebrity. But you have never said anything playful about me. Why is that?'

'Sire,' answered the Marquis, 'Your Majesty is not a subject.'

A French Grenadier, made a prisoner at Blenheim, and brought before Marlborough, was asked a few particulars about that march and those movements of the French army which landed Marshals Tallard and Marsin into their irretrievable disaster. The Duke showed visible signs of surprise at what he heard from the soldier, and, being much struck with his intelligence and martial look, said to the veteran, 'If France had had fifty thousand men like thyself, she would have been victorious.'

'We had enough men like myself,' replied the soldier. 'We were defeated because it was not an hundred thousand like me that we wanted, but only one like you!'

For his flattering frankness and wit the Duke sent him away a free man.

Henry IV., just after one of the victories by which he won his throne, cried to Crillon, who arrived too late for the battle, 'Hang thyself, brave Crillon, we have vanquished without thee!'

Later, the King being asked who was the most valiant knight in his kingdom, at once pointed to Crillon, saying, 'There he is!'

'That is a lie,' shouted blunt Crillon, 'a lie! for it is you, Sire, who are the bravest!'

XXXVI

NEWS FROM THE COURT

WE enjoy seeing a supercilious man discomfited by his superior in station or mind. And the greater the pomp on one side, and the simplicity on the other, the more we appreciate the exhibition.

A magistrate was once loftily questioning a witness who happened to be a poet.

'Oh, you are a poet! are you? Then, how do you live?'

'I live pretty well, Your Worship!'

'Just tell us how?'

'Well, generally a joint and a pudding.'

'No, no; I mean how do you get your bread?'

'Oh! it depends, Your Worship.'

'Well, you may as well answer.'

'I get it either at the baker's or at the chandler's.'

'But can you not be made to understand a single question? I want to know how you are doing?'

'Pretty well, thank you. I hope Your Worship is well, too?'

'All right. You may go down.'

'Are you prepared to swear to the mare's age?' asked Counsel of an ostler, who had been mixed up in a horse transaction.

'I am.'

'Upon what authority?'

'Upon what authority?' repeated the witness, doubtfully.

'You are to answer, not repeat, the question put to you.'

'Well, I want time to turn it over in my mind.'

'Nothing can be simpler than this question, sir. Upon what authority can you swear to the mare's age?'

'On the best authority,' replied the witness, archly.

'Then, why such evasion? Why not state it at once?'

'Well, then, if I *must* state it . . .'

'Must! you *shall* state it.'

'Then you must have it, I suppose?'

'Ay! I *will* have it!' loudly cried Counsel, striking the table with his fist.

'Well then, if you will have it,' answered the ostler, with apparent gravity, 'why, then, I had it myself from the mare's own mouth!'

Needless to add that 'roars of laughter' followed his unimpeachable statement.

The Count d'Alen was once passing through Lyons, and from a desire to show courtesy to the King's Lieutenant (of the Province), he called upon the stately official. The Count happened to meet him in the court-

yard of the palace, and before he could mention his quality and name, the King's Lieutenant, who saw by the nobleman's elegant clothes, that he could scarcely be a Lyons man, abruptly inquired, 'Whence do you come, friend?'

'From Paris.'

'From Paris, indeed! And what, friend, do they say there?'

'They say Mass.'

'No, my friend, I want to know if you heard anything?'

'Oh, yes; the noise of carriages.'

'I mean, friend, what is the newest thing out?'

'Green peas.'

'But have you heard no report at all, my friend?'

'Oh! yes, certainly.'

'Then, my friend, what report was that?'

'The report of cannon on the King's birthday.'

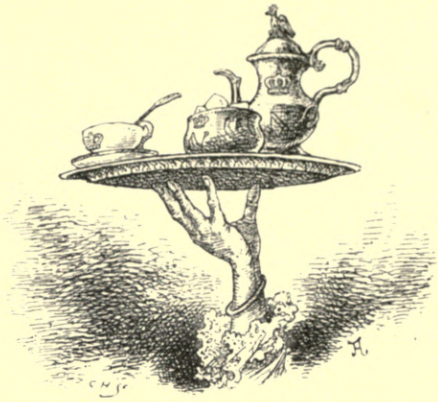
'You seem to know nothing, my friend. Perhaps you know your own name?'

'Certainly, sir.'

'And what may your name be, I wonder?'

'At Lyons, I am called "my friend," but in Paris I am called "the Count d'Alen."'

And the King's Lieutenant humbly apologised.



XXXVII

THE SIAMESE TWINS

GLOBE-TROTTERS are numerous enough in these days; but fifty years ago this title could have been given only to Americans. They were *the* travellers. As soon as money had been made, to Europe they came; across Europe they sped from end to end as fast as railways and steamers could carry them. These visitors from the New World to the Old Continent have become, since then, so much more numerous, and are nowadays increasing at such a rate, that all Americans, so to speak, know Europe as well, or better than we do ourselves. A man who returns home from his grand tour is now no longer a *rara avis*. As the story he would have to tell is always the same, and generally known, he does not talk over much, and he is not, as he would have been formerly, assailed by a crowd of inquirers eager to know all about the old country. A generation ago, the traveller who came home was a species of talking lion; you had only to touch a spring, as it were, and out came innumerable stories, in voluble rapidity, on scenery, cities, monuments, men, hostelries cooking, drinks, charges, manners, adventures; and in all these a central figure—the traveller himself—who had been an universally admired hero, just as much in

foreign parts as he now was among his own countrymen.

A thorough Yankee, who had just returned from Europe, was thus relating his travels to a crowd of listeners; and, after speaking of his adventures in Spain, Italy, Greece, Germany, Russia and Belgium, said that he had wound up by the two countries, that, after all, 'take the cake' between them—that is France and England. He had, before that, seen celebrated men and women, famous statesmen, well-known princes and lovely princesses, and, as he had spoken to most of them, he could say, 'speaking for himself,' that he had found them all very civil, and, as a rule, 'a pretty intelligent, and a pretty nice set of people.' But it was in Paris and in London that he had come across the very flower of the Old World. He could say, 'speaking for himself,' that these two places are 'pretty highly civilised,' old places though they are; for it is there that an American is appreciated best. He had not been three days in Paris before the Emperor, on his way to the 'Boa de Boulong,' had, when returning his salute, spotted him as a citizen of the New World. The Emperor had stopped his guards and carriage, and asked him to come to the 'Tooleries' to speak about America. He had gone to the Palace, and after an hour's talk, enlivened by smoking, the Emperor had sent for the Empress and said to her, 'Eugénie, I want to introduce you to a citizen of New York City. Sir, my wife. My dear, take the gentleman to your "Boodoa," and ask him the news; he has lots to say for himself.'

'The Empress took me along, and we had coffee together, and I can tell you one thing, friends, I did astonish the lady.

'"Sir," she said, with a smile, when we shook hands, "I have never been so astonished in my life. If you come this way again, don't forget to call."

'When they heard in London that I had been to

the "Tooleries,"—for you must know that Prince Albert has got reporters in every Court—they tried to out-do the Emperor and Empress. The day after my landing in London, the Prince called, and, as I was out, he left his card, and left word for me to call at the Palace on that day about four, but, if that was not quite convenient, I might call when I liked. I went, and the first thing he said was, "We don't want to be behind other people in showing attention to American citizens; and, as you have been the guest of other crowned heads, the Queen will be delighted to see you. Tea is ready in the 'Blue Boodoa' —come along."

'The fact was, they wanted to know something about Napoleon's policy, and I suspect they expected me to say what I knew. But I was very reserved; and though the Queen put leading questions now and then, I spoke to her of things in general. But as she is a pretty nice sort of woman, she showed no spite.'

Thus, the traveller went on describing the sights he had seen and the things he had heard. When the adventures had been exhausted, questions were put to him, and he readily replied to them. One of the listeners inquired, 'And, sir, when you were in Paris, did you see the wonder that makes them stare so?—I mean, did you see the Siamese Twins?'

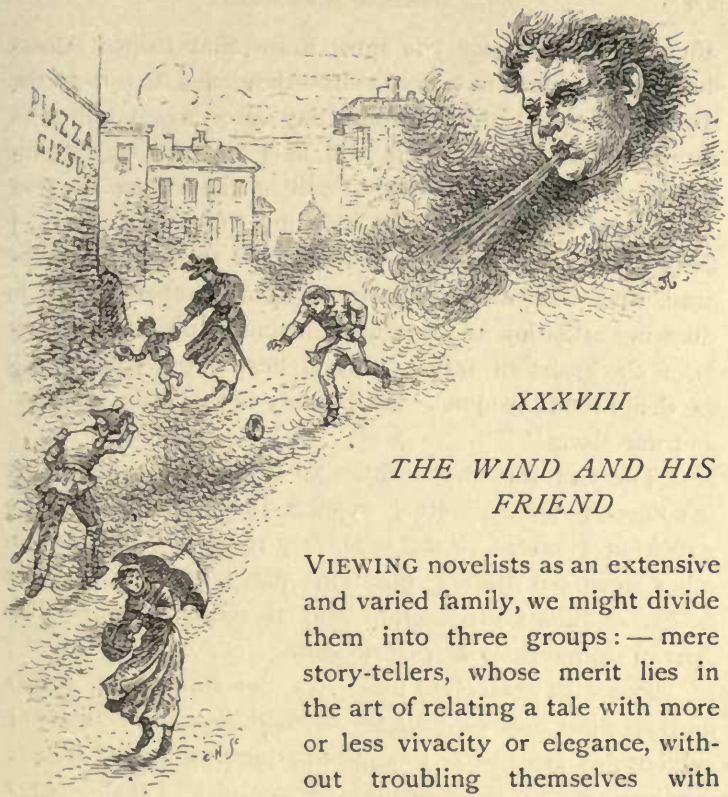
'Oh! yes—or rather, no. I only saw one of them. The other had gone to a fancy ball.'

'He had, had he?'

'Yes, he had.'

'Well, then,' said the inquirer, 'friends, after this, we had better adjourn.'

And they did adjourn, to the satisfaction of the traveller, who would, no doubt, have shown signs of uneasiness if a cross-examination had been instituted.



XXXVIII

THE WIND AND HIS FRIEND

VIEWING novelists as an extensive and varied family, we might divide them into three groups: — mere story-tellers, whose merit lies in the art of relating a tale with more or less vivacity or elegance, without troubling themselves with psychological analysis; sensational writers — whose exuberant imagination replaces worldly experience — who draw from their inner consciousness types of humanity which vie with those of fairy tales in ideal features less true than attractive; finally, authors— whose piercing eyes see through human flesh—who analyse the passions and dissect the heart with photographical truth. These last writers are gifted with the marvellous faculty of reading characters aright, and because of this faculty they will charm posterity as they do ourselves.

There is a subject-matter which even they have not attempted to grasp in our generation, and that is the Society of the Jesuits in its present condition. Eugène Sue painted it in terrible colours as it was more than half a century ago; Disraeli gave light sketches of it twenty-five years since; but the Order having the genius

of rapidly adapting itself to new requirements, these authors would now seem calumnious to many readers, so altered are the circumstances, so changed are the means of action of that religious community. The Jesuits are nowadays so unobtrusive, their tact—always wonderful since last century—is so keen and delicate, their presence is so completely screened from the public gaze, that it seems as if they were non-existent. Yet they are still in our midst, ever watchful of events, ever masterly in handling their own influence, ever superior to the situation, and ever directing, with deep learning and intellectual strength, the education of the highest and most thorough Catholics in Europe. We do not see them, but they see us. The fatal blow which Pascal struck at them more than two centuries ago discredited them so effectually that they abandoned the open battle-field, and have been fighting ever since behind ramparts. After ruining their famous doctrine—*the end justifies the means*—which authorised hypocrisy and slander, mendacity and stealing, injustice and murder; after revealing the subtlety, depravity and ambition of the Order; after vindicating the right of public morality and the right of human conscience, Pascal left to the people the mission of dealing with them as best they could, and the Jesuits' power vastly decreased. But that power had been so immense, ubiquitous, deep-rooted before, that for one hundred years they continued to rule Europe — that part which was within the sphere of their previous influence—with nearly as much success to themselves as they had done before Pascal routed them. Their audacity during that time grew afresh to such an extent that kings, governments, and the Papacy itself, were compelled to act with vigour against them; and since that energetic stand against their Order, their conflicts with modern society have been fewer and less embracing, and their weapons have been more subtle and less visible. When we think that no less a genius than Pascal was necessary to un-

mask them, and that he alone could have succeeded in so doing, we are well-nigh lost in admiration; and when we reflect that without him the network of intrigue they had cast over the whole of Catholic Europe would have enslaved nations and rulers alike, we are filled with gratitude towards him; but that they should have survived at all the onslaughts made upon them in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries is a marvel. It is to their prodigious organisation and discipline—which had given them the might they once wielded—that they are indebted for escaping total destruction, and for preserving the sway of which they are still in possession. Now that they use their influence without ostentation, and with a prudence and a modesty that cause them to be outwardly unfelt and unseen, we know little of what passes in their midst and are content to let fall between them and ourselves a curtain that conceals their presence; but that curtain is not so thick and impenetrable as to hide their past history. It is with a shudder that we remember that these estimable and refined teachers of the present day were, for upwards of two hundred years, the terror of the world. The work of the hideous Inquisition was ordered and done by them; they brought about wars of extermination, the victims of which could be counted by millions; they lit the fire that consumed hundreds of thousands of innocent men and women at the stake; they conducted persecutions in Germany and Spain, in Italy and the Netherlands, in France and England. The massacres that dishonour humanity—the St Bartholomew, the Dragonnades—were their doings; imprisonment, spoliation, torture, were their mildest misdeeds; daggers and poison were common weapons with which to murder the nobles, princes or kings who crossed their path. Theirs has been a history of daily bloodshed and unspeakable horrors. Rulers, whose confessors they had stealthily become, did their bidding and trembled. They did all these things in the name of Christian

faith, but in reality in the interest of their earthly domination. This was known, this was whispered with bated breath, but until Pascal broke their spell by his immortal *Provincial Letters*, no one durst speak openly.

Yet, curiously, there were at times among the people manifestations of popular emotion—even riots—expressing hatred and anger, which made the Jesuits pause for a while. This was the case especially in Italy, which, though fettered, had once been free, and always remained intellectual. Popular wits, and this not long after the Order had crept into supreme power, had the boldness to embody the latent and universal sentiment in legends that summed up the verdict of the general feeling. Stories, due to observation or invented by mirth, carried a judgment and a condemnation which later generations have fully endorsed and ratified. The following is probably the best of them.

It was a current belief in Rome that in the Piazza Giesù the wind blew all the year round, even during those calm days when the slightest breeze was felt nowhere around. The cause of this wonder was at last explained.

Some three hundred years ago, the Diavolo and the Wind agreed to travel together, and to assist each other if necessary. The wind, to show his strength, now uprooted trees and unroofed houses; now raised the waves of the sea and caused them to batter high cliffs down; at one time he ruined orchards and cornfields; at another he would accumulate clouds in such masses that torrents of rain deluged town and country, swelled rivers to overflowing, while thunder and lightning terrified and killed flocks and shepherds. His companion witnessed all this and sardonically laughed.

'Try to do better work than all this child's play,' he said; 'I see thou wantest advice. Look, yonder sails a fleet manned by countless sailors; swoop upon it; show thy might; sink it, and I shall gather a large harvest.'

And it was done. So went both evils in company;

the Wind being often pooh-poohed for his fitful performances that left no lasting traces.

'Thou art not a bad pupil,' the other would say, 'but thou art too light-headed and shifty to do enduring work. My doings are less fussy and less noisy; but they are eventful. If I plant a seed, it grows up to be a tree, by-and-by a forest that bears fruit year by year, and that fruit I can carry home and keep under my eye for my delectation for ages and ages. Thou art content to puff and work from hand to mouth, whereas I grow richer and richer as time rolls on.'

'Perhaps,' the Wind would reply, 'I shall do better under thy tuition.'

They kept together, and travelled round the world, visiting this region and that. Amongst other places they went to the Holy City. They visited the whole town to see what they could do. And one day, as they were passing on the Piazza Giesù, the Evil One said to his companion, 'Oh, oh! we are now in front of the College of the Jesuits. I have a good mind to pop in, for I might be of some little use to them, although they can manage affairs to my satisfaction. Now, good compeer, wait thou for me on the Piazza while I am in, and be sure not to go without me.' And since that time the Wind has been waiting on the square, turning round and round, and wondering how long his comrade would remain at the headquarters of the great religious institution.

Such was the playful explanation of the evils which afflicted our unhappy ancestors. Pascal gave us a picture; the encyclopædists gave us another; Eugène Sue gave us a third—each of them true for their time: we are waiting for one more equally true for ours.

XXXIX

MEMORABLE PREACHERS

MANY amusing anecdotes have been told about preachers.

Everybody, probably, knows the one in reference to a preacher who got up in the pulpit to deliver a sermon to one solitary worshipper who happened to be simple-witted.

'Is it not sad,' began the priest, 'that I should have only one idiot to preach to?'

'Ay' interrupted the parishioner, 'and if he was not an idiot he would not he here to hear you preach.'

The sermon proceeded no further.

There is the tale of a preacher in Italy who began to address his very small audience with the words; '*Pochissimi Fratelli*'—very few brethren; and at intervals repeated, 'Very few brethren,' with telling effect.

There is also the tale of the priest who, when returning home after the afternoon sermon, met some friends on his way, to whom he said, 'Why! would you believe it, I had only three or four donkeys to speak to!'

'And how did you address them?' a friend asked.

'Dear brethren, of course,' replied the preacher.

'Quite right,' said the kind friend.

University men may recollect the beginning of an examination sermon, read by a theological student before the Bishop and his Chaplain, who constituted the examining board.

'My audience,' said the student in divinity, 'is divided into two sets—the converted and the unconverted—'

'Before you proceed any further,' interrupted the Bishop, 'would you kindly tell us who is converted and who unconverted—my Chaplain or myself?'

A story which bears repeating is that of the young Curate, who was small in stature, and not much greater in intellect than in size, but had wits enough to know it. His text was: 'There was a man named Zacchæus who was little of stature, and he climbed up into a tree to see the procession, and he came down and went home.'

The sermon was an object lesson, which the speaker and auditory alike appreciated for its terseness and brevity.

'Zacchæus,' said the preacher, 'was a small man, and so am I; he was up a tree, and so am I; he came down and went home, and so do I.'

So began and ended a performance which delighted the whole parish.

In keeping with this there is an Arabian story, well known in Algeria, about a practical sermon preached one day by a Marabout in the mosque.

'Children of the Faithful,' he began, 'do you know what I am about to say? Answer everyone, do you know?'

'No,' they all shouted.

'Very well, then, you go home and learn it.'

The week after the holy man again began, 'Children of the Prophet, do you now know what I am going to say? Reply.'

'Some of us do,' was the answer, 'and some of us do not.'

'Ah! then, return home, and let those who know tell it to those who do not.'

The next week came round and the Marabout commenced once more by saying, 'Children of Mohammed do you now know what I am going to say?'

We do,' they all shouted.

'Well, then, as you know, it is unnecessary I should tell it to you again. Go home with my blessing!'

XL

THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

GREAT difference of age between two persons is usually considered a sufficient impediment to a matrimonial union. Marriages of this kind are rightly censured, for obvious reasons. Yet, unnatural as they seem, such unions are by no means unhappy in most cases, and though they violate social custom and ordinary sentiment, they frequently assure felicity.

Of all things in the world the gravest is that durable and indefeasible tie which is the basis of civilised society. Upon this institution depends the solidity of national morality. It has existed ever since the foundation of religion, law and order. It is almost safe to say that marriage makes one wretched couple only out of every ten. It insures protection to the weakness of woman. Therein she finds a safe shelter against the many evils which surround her; therein she finds the support of her children who are the source of her purest joys. Someone has justly observed that marriage is 'an eternal union that affection embellishes, content main-

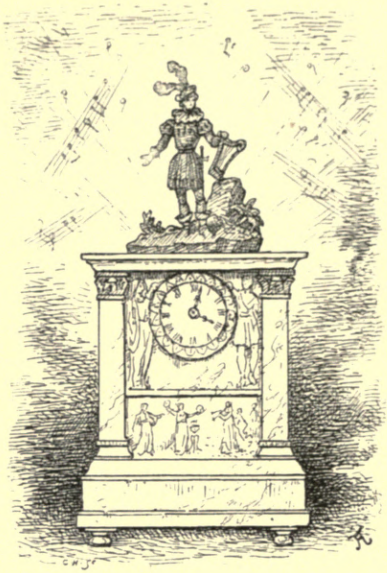
tains, and misfortune fortifies.' Settling our future home life, as it does, it is the most important act in our existence. Love may not always be present in marriage, but deep friendship or deep sympathy will, as a rule, replace it—not disadvantageously. This is the case between man and wife of different ages, and the sympathy will necessarily increase year by year through morality, kindness, order and love of work. When each person is the most agreeable company to the other, marriage can but be a blessing to both. But experience is powerless to enable one to foresee the consequences of a match. The shrewdest observer's prediction may often be falsified, because the consequences entirely depend upon the nature and temperament of each couple. A celebrated marriage furnishes a proof of this proposition.

When the lovely daughter of M. Richard at last consented to marry M. Récamier, an unusual sensation stirred the French capital. The highest society wondered how she could have made up her mind to accept such a husband, for if he was renowned for his immense wealth, he was an elderly, prosaic and plain man. She, the most beautiful woman in France, and worthy to adorn a throne, was actually going to become a mere banker's wife. The astonishment was the greater because she was known to possess uncommon qualities—sound sense, a high mind, admirable wit and thoughtfulness. There was therefore a great crush at the signature of the marriage settlement. Curiosity caused everyone to be present at the function—the more so as the trousseau and presents would be on view, and it was whispered that the future husband had spent almost a fortune on the *corbeille*. Bonaparte, then First Consul, had been invited to honour the preliminary ceremony with his presence. He went very willingly, as he particularly admired the beauty of the bride-elect. When he saw the princely *corbeille*, and its display of splendid stuffs, royal dresses, rare lace, rich jewellery, diamond

tiaras, pearl necklaces, precious stones, pins, brooches and bracelets in profusion, he exclaimed, 'Oh, oh! I see, the present makes one forget the future!'*

In this case disparity of age did not exclude unclouded happiness. Honest hearts are the safest source of domestic harmony. The husband is principally responsible for the peace of the home. He has been compared to a sculptor who is entrusted with a piece of precious marble to give it form and life. It is his mission to shape and develop his young wife. In the above story, the sculptor had fine material, and he had the wisdom to bring out the whole loveliness that lay within it.

* *Le présent fait oublier le futur.* The word *futur* in French means the intended husband and the time to come; and in the same way the word *présent* means gift and present time.



XLI

LADY GOWER'S WISDOM

LADIES, by the constant practice of using their tongues —for it can hardly be denied they are fond of talking— acquire a proficiency in the art of conversation far higher than that generally attained by the sterner sex. As a natural consequence, they become more than a match for the so-called lords of creation in smart speech, and the wit they develop at an early age— eclipsing, as it often does, the dull capacity of gentlemen in that respect—induces them to conceive a not always undeserved contempt for their husbands, brothers and intended bridegrooms. This was the case last century, in a much greater degree than at present, because the intercourse of ladies with one another was incessant, and conduced to intelligence, shrewdness and worldly cleverness; whilst, on the other hand, men—almost wholly addicted to sport and heavy revels, to say the least — grew unrefined and obtuse. It is

probable that women will never hold their sway over Society, to the same extent as they did in that material age.

Lady Gower had an exceedingly beautiful niece, whom she wished to marry into one of the highest families in the kingdom. She wanted to make her a duchess or a marchioness, and she found for her an eligible *parti* in the person of the Marquess of W——. The beauty of the young lady was so fascinating that the young nobleman was only too happy to be allowed to woo, and undergo the ordeal of waiting. The future bride, however, was very timid, but, at the same time, clever enough to have a will of her own in the matter. She wanted her marriage to be a blissful one, and she was conscious that her beauty enabled her not only to wait, but to choose for herself. She would only say 'Yes' when she had thoroughly satisfied and convinced herself that the man she would honour was one to be relied upon as capable of devoting himself, heart and soul, to her own happiness. The Marquess, rather inclined to hasten the conclusion of the event, was most assiduous in his visits to Lady Gower, and in seeking opportunities of making himself agreeable to the young lady. He, besides, gave a party now and then, which enabled him also to display his establishment to advantage. Things went far enough for him to venture upon asking the two ladies to lunch. On this occasion he was more attentive to them than ever before; so much so, that he made no doubt that the object of his assiduity must, in a day or two, pronounce the decisive word. Whilst Lady Gower and her niece were driving home after this quiet entertainment, the aunt said, 'Well, my dear, what do you say of him at last? Don't you think he will make an admirable husband? Why, he is head and shoulders above the generality of young men.'

'Well, aunt, I do not deny that he appears to have

excellent points; but who knows whether the qualities he exhibits are not assumed, and that a few months after marrying he will not be quite different?'

'But, my dear, have you not remarked a thing which reveals the genuineness of his heart?'

'No; what do you mean?'

'Have you not seen the new clock he has bought?'

'Yes; you mean the lovely musical clock on the chimney-piece.'

'Well, my dear, is not that enough for you to decide, and accept his hand?'

'Why so, aunt? I do not see what difference that clock makes to me?'

'My dear, it makes all the difference. Before luncheon we did not know him completely; but now we do—the clock showed us his true character.'

'Really, aunt, I do not understand what you mean.'

'Mean, my dear? Why, can't you see that a man who is simple-minded enough to take a delight in a *musical* clock can be no Machiavelli, and that you will easily lead him by the tip of his nose all your life.'

'Auntie, dear, you are admirable. That revelation is conclusive. I'll marry the dear soul.'

The ladies of that time were wise in their generation.

XLII

CURIOUS CHALLENGES

DUELLING is dying out at last. In England it has long since ceased to be considered as a satisfactory means of avenging or redressing a wrong.

Common sense will no longer admit a mode of argument bequeathed by the violent and unreasoning world of 'the good old times.' Modern law has provided us with adequate remedies to punish a personal offence. Even calumny, so often difficult to trace to its source, does not escape penalty. When Rousseau unanswerably demonstrated the folly of duelling, he astonished his generation by daring to write against an immemorial mode of settling a quarrel. What astonishes us nowadays is, that his eloquent onslaught should have been necessary to prove the absurdity of fighting about a point of honour. For how did the matter stand?—A, a man of blameless character, considered himself insulted by the disparaging remarks uttered by

B, who notoriously was a despicable bully. A duel ensued. B killed A. The sword avenged the wronged man by sending him to a better world. Had A killed B, the once stainless man would have lived in remorse, with the blood of his fellowman on his conscience. Either way, where did his satisfaction come in? If this mad practice has died out in England, it still, however, flourishes on the Continent, and we hear now and then of a fatal encounter. It is true that most duels do not end tragically, and harmless results often incline us to view the hostile meetings as a farce; but in reality they are not a farce at all, since the same risk exists in harmless as in deadly battle—the harmlessness being due to a happy chance, viz.: want of skill in both combatants. Public opinion, even in France, is beginning to tell against the barbarous custom, and the time is not far distant, we think, when it will be a thing of the past.

Before duelling was at all discredited in civilised countries there had been very queer challenges followed by ludicrous effects, and, curiously enough, the comicality imparted to them was, as a rule, brought about by *sensible behaviour* on the part of one of the opponents.

Josepin, who considered himself the rival of the best painters of his time, having heard that his pictures were not always admired by Annibal Carracci, wanted to settle the question of artistic supremacy sword in hand. and went to challenge the great Bolognese master. Annibal seized a painting brush, and quietly showing it to the irate Josepin, said, with commanding coolness, 'And I challenge you with this weapon, and with it I mean to vanquish you.' Needless to say that no duel ensued either with the brush or with the sword.

An irascible little man fancied himself deeply aggrieved by a gentleman of colossal proportions, because, whenever they met, a smile played upon the lips of the giant,

which he took for an insulting smile of mockery, although most people would have interpreted it rather as an expression of good-humoured kindliness. The undersized gentleman sent his seconds to deliver a challenge to his man. Instead of accepting it off-hand, the challenged party said, 'I do not object to fight if such is the wish of your principal; but before I do so, perfect equality between him and me should be established.'

'How so, sir?' one of the seconds asked.

'Why, I am twice as big as your friend, and whether we use swords or pistols, I shall present a much larger surface to his weapon than he to mine. Please, gentlemen, go and debate this point with him. When this is settled, I shall appoint seconds to meet you and arrange for the time and place.'

To this objection the challenger had the wit, or the impudence, to reply that he would undertake to hit his opponent within a limited portion of his body, and that, should he hit beyond the limits of the specified surface, the hit or hits should not count. When this proposal had been, with some hesitation, reported to the tall and bulky adversary, instead of flying into a passion as the seconds expected, he laughed merrily, and naturally declared that the disparity would be increased tenfold.

'I think,' he said 'a simpler means might be found. The difficulty might be easily overcome if your friend would only take my advice.'

'What is that?' they inquired.

'Why, as a fight will be just as good a duel two or three months hence as it would be to-morrow, let him every morning do what I used to do myself when I was a growing lad, that is, eat plenty of porridge, and when he has, by this wholesome food, grown as big as I am, I will meet him. Until then I will have nothing to do with this ridiculous challenge. I think, gentlemen, you will agree that my proposal is as practicable and reasonable as his own.'

And as the matter was not susceptible of an arrangement either way, it naturally dropped.

This question of equality of advantages in a duel was settled in a still more effectual manner in a quarrel between a military man and a medical gentleman. The latter objected that, never having held a sword or a pistol in his life, whereas the Officer was known as a fine swordsman and a dead shot, the chances were all in his opponent's favour. The Doctor, however, having the choice of weapons, undertook to find means to equalise the contest. The Officer's seconds accepted this offer, and next morning both adversaries and their seconds met on the field. The Doctor then, showing a tiny box, said, 'Gentlemen, here are two pills—one quite innocuous, the other a deadly poison. Let my opponent have first choice.'

This staggering proposal was declined with thanks.

'I prefer apologising,' said the Officer; 'a sword's scratch or even a broken arm is one thing, but certain death is another. Doctor, I crave the privilege of your friendship.'

And the two brave men, brought to their senses forthwith, cemented their amity by a merry breakfast.

Voiture, the charming wit and delightful poet of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, was once challenged by a gentleman smarting under a repartee.

'Sir,' playfully said Voiture, in reply to the proposal to fight, 'the game is altogether one-sided; you are tall, brave, skilful—whereas I am little, cowardly and awkward. You wish to kill me. Well, then, I declare myself a dead man.'

It goes without saying that his challenger was appeased by such a handsome acknowledgment of his superiority.

Sometimes a duel ends to the utmost satisfaction of all concerned.

Thomas Moore was very angry with the *Edinburgh*

Review for its unsparing criticism of his *Odes and Epistles.* He sent a challenge to the great critic, Francis Jeffrey. The Hon. William Robert Spencer gave his pistols to Moore to go to the fighting ground, and gave due warning of the duel to the police. When the poet and the critic met each other on the field, they were then meeting for the first time in their lives, and so little fierceness fired their breasts that they bowed to each other, and while the pistols were being loaded, Jeffrey said, without a tinge of bloodthirstiness, 'What a beautiful morning it is!'

'Yes,' replied Moore, with a smile, 'it is a morning made for better purposes,' to which mild words Jeffrey gently answered by 'a sort of assenting sigh.'

Walking up and down side by side while the loading was slowly proceeding, Moore related to Jeffrey how, under similar circumstances, an Irishman—Billy Egan—had peeped through the trees to see the loading operations, and how his opponent had shouted to him, 'Don't make yourself unaisy, my dear fellow; sure isn't it bad enough to take the dose, without being by at the mixing up?'

Jeffrey was smiling at the story when the dreadful weapons were served out. Both lamb-like antagonists having retired to a proper distance from each other, they raised their pistols, waiting for the signal to fire, when, just in the nick of time, constables rushed out from behind a hedge, disarmed the two duellists and took them, crestfallen, but not unhappy, to Bow Street. This duel led to a lasting friendship between the combatants.

The Provost of Dublin, Hutchinson, quarrelled with the Irish Attorney-General, Tisdale, and sent him his seconds. Tisdale flatly refused to fight, not only because he was seventy-three years of age, but because he could derive no satisfaction from the duel.

'If I should kill Hutchinson,' said he, 'I should get nothing but the pleasure of killing the fellow, whereas, if he kills me, he will get my place of Secretary of State, of which he has the reversion.'

As it was not easy to find an answer to this excellent argument, the two men remained content with reviling each other.

We should not much mind hearing of duels every day, if their termination were attended with no more disastrous results than in the instances just recorded.

XLIII

FORCE OF WIT

THAT wit has often benefitted those who were sufficiently well gifted to make clever sallies is comprehensible enough: the surprise and admiration which are aroused in the hearer's mind by striking answers are so sudden and unexpected, that a complete change of resolve is not unfrequently their natural effect, and in that case, both the benefactor and the benefitted one alike share our sympathy—the latter for his mental resource, the former for his generous impulse or kindly disposition.

A few examples may show how variously the charm of wit may operate.

A Prussian soldier made a great show of a huge watch chain; but as unfortunately he had no watch, he had a musket bullet fixed to it and duly hidden in his

fob. His comrades occasionally joked him about his love of display. Frederick II., having heard of this, once, at a review of his troops, stopped in front of the soldier, and, to enjoy his embarrassment, asked him, 'Well, my man, just tell me the time your watch marks?'

'It marks that at every hour of the day I must be ready to give up my life for Your Majesty.'

The King, who had intended to laugh at the confusion of his devoted soldier, gave him a kindly smile and the watch he evidently desired into the bargain.

Four Austrian soldiers had been sentenced to death for some very serious breach of discipline. The Emperor, Joseph II., whose humanity was proverbial and who was more like a father than a ruler to his people, thought that if one out of the four paid the penalty, the sternness of military law would be sufficiently upheld and vindicated, and the four sentenced men were required to draw lots to know which of them should undergo the condemnation. One of the four, however, obstinately refused to draw.

'And why should you refuse doing what your comrades are ready to do?' he was asked.

'Because,' replied the soldier, 'our beloved Emperor has forbidden games of chance.'

The kind Sovereign, to whom this was reported, delighted at the presence of mind of the trooper, at once granted a free pardon to the four culprits.

In the fierce wars which raged in France in the sixteenth century between the Catholics and the Protestants each victory on one side or the other was stained by a wholesale massacre of the prisoners taken in battle. These wars had that character of cruelty which generally mark civil conflicts, but private hatred and vengeance gave them an additional feature of savagery only met with in the crusades against the Albigenses, and the

Thirty Years' War, in the annals of modern history. Montluc, one of the Catholic leaders in the South, would break on the wheel as many as thirty or forty Protestant prisoners, or hang seventy at a time in the market-place. He was accompanied by professional executioners. Baron des Adrets, a Protestant leader in the Rhone Valley, gained dreadful celebrity by his acts of retaliation. After the capture of Montbrison, he had many of the defenders of the fortress decapitated, and sentenced the rest, two hundred, to precipitate themselves from the top of a lofty tower upon the pikes of his soldiers below, and he actually witnessed the execution of his decree. One after another the wretched but heroic prisoners leaped undaunted into eternity. Of the number, there was one soldier who twice made a rush to the brink of the parapet and there stopped.

'Go on, jump away!' cried Des Adrets to him; 'to try the ford twice is enough to cross the stream.'

'I will give you four tries to do it yourself,' answered the soldier.

Des Adrets could not forbear smiling at the sally, and he ordered the release of the prisoner. The others died.

XLIV

UNKIND CRITICS

AUTHORS are just as blind to the defects of their works as fond parents are to those of their children. And not unnaturally. For the more labour a production has cost a writer, the more value does it possess in his eyes. The work may be poor; but if the brain that has been at great pains in elaborating it, if the poet has spent wakeful nights on the rack of mental exertion and intellectual toil, spinning, twisting, stretching a thought which refused to become powerful by any process, pursuing an image that refused to become graceful, hammering at a rhythm that refused to be musical, hunting for rhymes that refused to fit either sound or sense, that poet will not easily persuade himself that his time, trouble and struggle have been lost. He will look tenderly upon his offspring. Why, even a Milton

had this human weakness. Of his two epic poems he preferred *Paradise Regained*, because, owing to the slenderness of the action, it had been more difficult to compose, and had cost him infinite effort. If a poet of imperial genius can show such frailty, what fatuity may we not expect from an ordinary mortal!

A young university man of last century, who had obtained his degree with honours, was under the delusion that the eyes of the world were fixed upon him, and he hastened to compose an epic poem whilst his laurels were yet green, and his name was, as he fancied, in everybody's mouth. When he had finished his work to his own satisfaction, he took it to Porson, one of the famous scholars of the time, begged him to peruse it, and to express his candid opinion upon the poetical spirit, the imagination, the plan, the invention, the subject-matter and the style of its author. Some few weeks later he returned to the great scholar, and in one breath inquired, 'Well, Mr Porson, have you read my poem? Do you like it? Do you think I ought to publish it? Will people read it?'

'My dear sir,' replied Porson, 'since you have asked me all about your work in one sentence, I can answer all these questions in one sentence—your poem will be read when Homer and Virgil have been forgotten.'

'Oh, thank you, sir,' exclaimed the young poet, elated; 'I am exceedingly delighted to hear you express such a favourable opinion. I knew my work was good, of course, but a man is always more or less unfit to judge of the value of his own creation. Now I am safe, and if you will kindly give me the manuscript I will run to the printers.'

He went; he had the poem printed; and he had it all to himself—the earth rolling on in its orbit as if nothing had happened.

A young Persian versifier, who had just read a poem

of his to Jami, whose approbation he sought, pointed out to the great poet that he had cleverly contrived to write his stanzas without the letter 'A' occurring once in them. Jami, who had listened attentively, gave his opinion in the shape of advice.

'As you have left out 'A' in order to make your verses uncommon,' he said, 'you can easily make them more uncommon still by leaving out the other vowels.'

The same story is current in France, and is said to have referred to a poetaster who consulted Boileau. The critic on this occasion advised the removal of the other letters of the alphabet.

Piron was no more tender-hearted under similar circumstances. He returned a huge manuscript to its author once without any comments. The young poet rapidly turned over the pages of his work to see whether the critic had pencilled marks in the margin by way of suggesting improvements, and perceiving nothing of the kind: 'What!' he cried, with a face beaming with satisfaction, 'no crosses anywhere?'

'No crosses!' replied Piron; 'did you want me to turn your work into a cemetery?'

From another young writer, Piron once received a pheasant with a gracious little note, begging him to kindly accept it as a testimony of sincere regard. Next day, the young man called, and drawing a tragedy from his pocket: 'Sir,' said he, 'may I venture to ask your opinion about this play?'

'I see!' answered Piron, 'this is the sauce I must eat your pheasant with; be good enough to take the bird back.

XLV

TOMMY ATKINS'S ANCIENT BROTHERS

WHO, in these days of ours, is not fond of Tommy Atkins? Who does not delight to see him in his regimentals, marching with elastic step and in high spirits, to the martial tune of the band? Who does not experience a feeling of affection for him, when, neat and spruce, straight as a dart, with his glossy hair properly trimmed, with his cap rakishly stuck sideways on the tip of his right ear, with rounded arms and elbows foremost, with a light stick in his hand, he briskly passes along the street and makes his heels ring on the pavement in pursuit of his love? Who, more than he, has been the deserving subject of popular song? Is he not as brave as unpretending, as enduring as merry, as cheerful as serviceable, ever ready and ever proud to give up his life for his country in India, at the Cape, or in the Soudan? And what soldier has earned more laurels and won more battles in every part of the globe than dear Tommy Atkins? Thou art a hero, Tommy—every inch of thee! and thou dost not suspect it, Tom!

Look at that picture, and at this.

Long before the good, honest, brave Tommy Atkins was in existence, and stood as a model warrior in the modern world, armies—especially on the Continent, say, one hundred and fifty years ago—were recruited from the very lowest class of vagabonds, and the word soldier was generally the synonym of thief. This was really the case, military discipline and training notwithstanding, because the pay—which was of the poorest—was either paid irregularly, or left unpaid altogether.

A traveller once went to the Captain of a company on the march to complain that three of his straggling soldiers had robbed him on the highway of a warm new cloak, and he begged for immediate redress.

'My dear man, I do not believe your story at all,' quoth the Captain.

'How so, Captain?' replied the traveller; 'I can swear to the robbery, and I can identify the men!'

'It won't do for me, I tell you!' retorted the Captain. 'I know my men better.'

'But,' insisted the complainant, 'this is not the way an honest burgess like me should be treated by the soldiers of his King, and I appeal to your sense of justice to obtain the return of my cloak.'

'It is precisely my sense of justice that gives me the conviction that none of my men had anything to do with the theft. You could, by no means, have your cloak restored in any case, for it would be sold by this time. But my soldiers would never rob a well-to-do man like you of so mean an object as a cloak.'

'By all I hold sacred on this earth, I can assure you, Captain, that I was shamefully robbed.'

'Then it could be none of my troopers who stole the cloak, I repeat!'

'Why should you, Captain, flatly contradict my story?'

'I contradict it flatly, because, if any of my men had robbed you at all, I can assure you they would have robbed you of all you possess besides your cloak, and would have left you naked on the road. I know them. Believe me, and think yourself fortunate not to have fallen into their clutches.'

'What, then, am I to do, Captain?' inquired the traveller.

'Rest, and be thankful!' answered the Officer.

XLVI

CHIVALROUS NELSON

THE greatest sea commander of all times and countries, and probably the hero of heroes—Nelson—was not without faults. He committed, owing to his strong passionate impulse, acts that historians cannot find words to palliate.

The best excuse that can be found to partly obliterate from our minds the painful impression some of the episodes of his life would otherwise leave upon us, is that a hero without passions would be no complete hero. Impassioned feeling makes him romantic, and adds a certain radiance to his glorious personality. What can surround the chivalric warrior with a more fascinating halo than love? And thus Nelson, swayed

both by love and by patriotism, will always remain the pet hero of a great people, blending in his person the frailty of man and the greatness of the mighty war-god.

The true knight of old chivalry had a lofty spirit that was never sullied by petty envy. He was too noble in mind and heart to be actuated by that base quality. Nelson shared with him this beautiful characteristic, we think, in the highest degree. He loved his subordinates, when worthy, with a warmth and sincerity, which made him admire and praise their deeds. He was too great to feel jealousy at the prowess of brave men. He loved them as brothers; they loved him as a friend. But if his attachment to his friends was ardent, their admiration for him was as genuine as their love. At Trafalgar, both the chief and his subordinates gave proof of the most sincere reciprocity of esteem and affection. Admiral Collingwood was first engaged, and he bore right upon the centre of the enemy's line, cutting it through 'astern of the *Santa Anna*,' and engaging her under the very muzzle of her guns on the starboard side.

'See,' shouted Nelson, how that noble fellow, Collingwood, carries his ship into action!'

And when Collingwood stood between two storms of fire and shot, he joyfully exclaimed, 'What would not Nelson give to be here!' The annals of war contain no record of chivalrous spirit superior to this.

But there is an instance of Nelson's generosity and affection which reveals the whole beauty of his character.

When he was presented to George III., the King did not forget to compliment him on his great actions and to thank him for the service he had done the country. His Majesty also condoled with him on the loss of his eye and of his arm. But Nelson, wheeling round to Captain Berry, his faithful companion through-

out his victories, introduced him to George III., and wishing to pay the gallant captain the highest compliment he could, he said, 'My LOSS, I assure Your Majesty, is not so great as you imagine,' for if I have lost my right arm in your service, here is my *right hand.*'

No wonder his friends said of him, 'Our Nel is as brave as a lion and as gentle as a lamb.'

XLVII

PRINCESS DE TALLEYRAND ASTONISHES HER GUESTS

It seems to ordinary mortals an almost inexplicable fact that some great men should have chosen to marry women altogether inferior to them, not in genius—for that was outside the compass of possibility—but in birth, position, education and breeding, even women whose natural gifts were far below those of the average humdrum wife. Many instances of such marriages are well-known to students, from Xantippe's time downwards. We all remember Göthe, whose wife was a good type of the German *frau* — a good housekeeper, who cared for little beyond the cleanliness of her rooms, the polish of her furniture, and the wholesomeness of her food. Talleyrand took to his bosom a lady of the same homely

kind, who was probably inferior to Madame Göthe as a housewife, and certainly inferior to most women in intellectual capacity. Who does not wonder at Diderot having married his Annette, and Rousseau his Theresa? The plea for such a choice on the part of great men is that an ungifted wife is unlikely to intrigue, meddle in important affairs, and trouble a husband with her opinions or pretensions, and is likely to give him the domestic peace necessary to him in the pursuit of great objects.

Madame de Talleyrand was a former Madame Grand, whose ignorance and small wits were proverbial. Her reading, needless to say, was not extensive, and her tact was hardly greater than her reading.

Prince Talleyrand, who wanted to honour science in one of its best representatives, gave a state dinner to Denon, who some time before had returned from Egypt, and whom all Europe admired for his scientific explorations in the land of the Pharoahs. The day before the dinner party, Talleyrand said to the Princess, 'In order that you may know what to talk about with Denon, who has travelled much and will sit next to you at dinner, you will do well to read some pages of his work. Go to the librarian and ask for his book.'

Madame de Talleyrand, who heard Denon's name for the first time, went to the library; and, by the time she arrived there, she had forgotten the exact name.

'I want,' she said to the librarian, 'that curious book of travels by De—De— What do you call him?'

'Defoe, I suppose your ladyship means?'

'Yes, that is it, I think. Pray give it to me.'

As soon as she opened *Robinson Crusoe*, she was so interested that she read the best part of the story by the next day, and she took the author for the hero of the book.

The great dinner began in the usual solemn silence, when Madame de Talleyrand, wishing to open the conversation cleverly, said to Denon, in a voice audible to

all the guests, 'How happy you must have felt, sir, when you found the good man Friday!'

The event was unexpected. Everyone stared, wondering; and Talleyrand felt, for the first time in his life a cold perspiration upon his brow.

'She actually takes him for Robinson Crusoe!' he thought, and then, with a smile, he said to Denon, 'I made Madame de Talleyrand believe you were of the same family as Robinson Crusoe, and she has dreamt that you were Robinson himself. Madame,' said he to his wife, 'M. Denon and Robinson are not even relatives. I beg your pardon for having deceived you in the matter.'

Madame de Talleyrand thought her husband a rogue, Denon a fool, Robinson an imposter, and herself an injured woman; and she was as unconscious of the hilarity she caused in Paris, as Talleyrand was sensible of it.

XLVIII

COUNT GOURVILLE AND THE SHOOTING PARTY

No comic poet ever succeeded in curing the defects of Society in the same degree as Molière. Neither the sarcasm of Aristophanes, nor the satire of the prince of dramatic poets—Shakespeare—worked the wonder of correcting, so quickly and so thoroughly, those eccentricities of affectation and fooleries of fashion, that grotesqueness of ignorance, that hideousness of hypocrisy which threatened to turn the French into a nation of idiots, fops and rascals. He brought back common sense and propriety. He had powerful coadjutors in the great writers of the time. Fénélon, La Fontaine, La Bruyère and Boileau, each in a different literary sphere, worked in the same field, no doubt, and did immense moral and social good, but it was the greatest of all comic poets who exercised supreme influence.

Soon after the representation of Molière's 'Malade Imaginaire,' which had excited universal laughter at the expense of the ignorant medical men of the period, Gourville, one of the best wits of the Court of Versailles,

met one morning a well-known doctor on his way to a shooting expedition. The doctor carried a gun and a rapier, and was followed by two servants, each of whom was carrying a gun, too. Gourville, who had seen Diafoirus and Purgon on the stage, did not let the occasion slip.

'What,' said he, 'what, doctor, armed to the teeth! Are you afraid to miss your patients?'

The medical man passed on, bowing placidly, without asking for an explanation. He probably understood the jest. A generation later, the Purgons might flourish elsewhere, but, thanks to Molière, they existed no longer in France.

About the same time a man was indicted for having publicly declared that he would, in a short while, kill at least five hundred persons to make his fortune. After hearing the witnesses, the judge asked him, 'Is it true?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'but I only meant that I should soon become a physician.'

He was acquitted, though everyone was convinced he would keep his word.

Molière's want of confidence in the medical art, and still greater mistrust of its practitioners, was shared by Addison. With the humour for which he was so famous, the latter once compared doctors to the army of the ancient Britons as Cæsar described it. 'Some slay on foot, some slay in chariots. If the infantry makes less execution than the cavalry, it is because they cannot convey themselves with so much rapidity into all quarters, nor despatch their business in so short a time.' Some people would have the levity to declare that things are just reversed at present. But it is safe to say that matters have so immensely improved since Addison's time, that physicians are no longer liable to such accusations; they, on the contrary, command respect for their sterling knowledge, and in-

spire affectionate regard for their usual devotion to their fellowmen.

The Chinese doctors are probably still at that stage of stagnant knowledge or scanty experience which distinguished our own medical men two hundred years ago. The Emperor of China once inquired of the English Ambassador how physicians were paid in Europe. Sir George Staunton explained it to him.

'Then,' said the Emperor, 'I wonder how anyone can afford to be ill? I deal with my physicians differently. I have four to whom the care of my health is entrusted, and I allow them a weekly salary; but the moment I am indisposed the salary is stopped until I am well again. I need hardly inform you that my illness is always of short duration.'

This plan would certainly have accelerated the progress of medical science if it had been adopted in Europe in the Middle Ages.

XLIX

THE BLIND MAN OF DAMASCUS

EASTERN tales are innumerable. The collection which is familiar to us under the name of the *Arabian Nights*, is, as Sir Richard Burton showed by his complete translation, but a fragment of the original series. Extensive as it is, the collection, however, is only one specimen of Eastern imagination; for the stories written in oriental languages are literally endless. Many of them, like our Æsopian fables carry a lesson either of wisdom, morality, conduct or common sense. One of them, a mere trifle certainly, is not a bad example of the very numerous short stories universally known in the East.

A blind man, well known as such by the people of Damascus, was one dark night carrying a jar of oil home from the merchant's warehouse. He had the broad-bottomed jar on his head, and felt his way

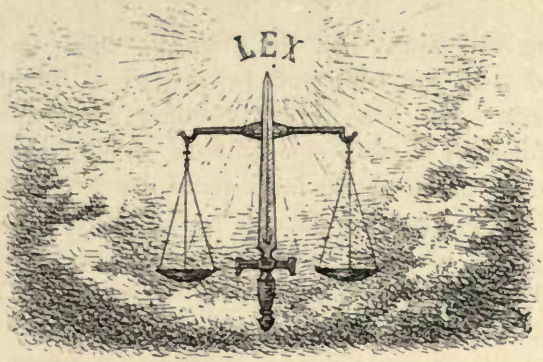
along the lanes with the stick he held in his right hand. In his left hand he carried a brightly-lighted lantern. He was slowly wending his way when he was met by a man—a neighbour of his—who, recognising him, broke out in immoderate laughter, and shouted in jesting tones, modulated by his mirth,—'Now, then, Abdullah, what in the world dost thou carry a bright light for? Art thou such a fool as to believe that, blind as thou art, thou wilt see thy way better?'

'I do not carry a lamp for myself,' replied Abdullah, but for such fools as thou; for did I not, thou wouldst not see me, and thou mightest knock thy wooden head against me, and break my oil jar, which the Prophet forbid!'

'Then,' said the other, 'thou art not such a fool as thou seemest, Abdullah?'

'No, man, but thou art,' said the blind man.

We now and then hear of a collision at sea. Not long ago a vessel went down in the North Sea, after being struck amidships by a steamer, and the calamity was proved to have been caused by the absence of proper lights on board the lost craft. The captain who neglects the duty of lighting his ship deserves to be sunk, especially if, as seems often to be the case, the absence of light is due to greed—is due, that is, to the desire to spare oil, and pocket the money saved thereby. But if a guilty skipper goes down deservedly, what about the meritorious crew who are drowned with him through his neglect? They, together with their widows and children, are his victims. Such a disregard of duty for gain, involving loss of life, should be made a capital offence. A vessel carries lights, not to find her way better, but to warn other vessels of her presence. The Damascus blind man carrying a bright lantern teaches sailors their necessary duty—and the comical little tale just told, therefore, carries a moral as sound as Eastern apologues usually do.



L

THE BEAUTY OF ENGLISH LAW

EVERY nation is ready to boast, every day in the year, that the laws and judicial system by which it is ruled is the best in the world. The Moslems swear by the beauty of the Koran law; the Hindus by the just principles of the Menu code; the Chinese by the paternal sense of Confucian pandects; the French by the simplicity and clearness of Napoleon's legislation; and the English by the right-loving foresight of their statutes. It is probable no philosopher could decide which nation is right in so claiming the palm of excellence; but it is easy enough for a thinking man to point out glaring defects here, there, everywhere, which make him wonder whether many of the laws could ever have been proposed, discussed and passed by sane men. And this doubt is the natural conclusion at which all men, except lawyers, would arrive after becoming acquainted with the facts of the case as they stand. In England, within the time the country has enjoyed a Parliament—say six hundred years—no less than twenty thousand laws have been put in force. Twenty thousand laws! Ye mortals, think of it! And very few of those were simple and

clear, since most of them had scores, and even hundreds of clauses. Were these twenty thousand laws good, bad, indifferent? The answer is supplied by the fact that some seventeen thousand have been superseded by others. The superseding of three-fourths of the rest is a mere matter of time. The three years, ending in 1872, witnessed the repeal of two thousand seven hundred and sixty acts, besides the amending of seven or eight hundred others. Of the statutes of the present reign alone upwards of six hundred have been totally repealed, and as many partially amended, within the short lapse of three sessions! If so many acts have been erased from the Statute Book, what kind of wisdom could have been that of the legislators who passed them? The question is aggravated by the reflection that numerous statutes in force now are in absolute contradiction to older statutes that are still in force, too. Who will ever enumerate the unspeakable injuries and miseries of all sorts, inflicted upon helpless people, not for a day only but for centuries, by these innumerable vicious enactments?

In view of this wisdom (!) and this simplicity (!) we need not be astonished at the proverbial 'uncertainty of law,' the daily disagreement of judges and lawyers in very simple equity cases, and the number of decisions which are reversed in one court to be upheld in the highest court on final appeal. What are we to think of a system of laws which afford more protection to property than to the person, and punish far more severely aggression on the former than aggression on the latter—meting out, as they do, a heavy penalty to the perpetrator of petty larceny, and a light penalty to the brutish ruffian who half murders an inoffensive human being? Moreover, what are we to think of the fiction, acted upon as if it were sober fact, that all those laws — with their ten thousand clauses — which are mostly unknown to the judges themselves, and

muddle their brains or puzzle their wits when brought within their ken, are, and must be known beforehand by every man, woman, and child? After this simple exposition, the boast of an Englishman about British law is not easy to understand, unless we take it as evidence of unalloyed patriotism. But if the law be imperfect, to use a mild term, is not the judical procedure something to be proud of? It is, fortunately. For the jury is an institution which compensates for a multitude of evils. Practical common sense corrects erring abstract wisdom; and the plain straightforwardness of ordinary citizens makes up for the sins of stately law-makers. Yet, even this unimpeachable institution is at times violated by human perversity—for the judge may, and does, lay aside the finding of the jury and decide in opposition to that finding. This, indeed, does not take place very often, but that it should happen and be possible at all reveals an imperfection so monstrous that honest men are compelled to own that, in practice, the judicial procedure is almost as faulty as the law itself—especially if we take into account the judge's power to punish a witness for mere contempt of court with unlimited imprisonment — in one case fifteen years. And when we descend from these grave deficiencies, which arouse stern reprobation, to the mere routine of court processes, we are inclined to laugh, or weep rather, at the want of sense, the absurd formalities and traditions, whimsical pranks, grotesque cross-examination, and outrageous waste of time and fees, of the remunerated legal actors of a court. One instance is as good an illustration of these defects as a hundred. Let us take one of many typical cases.

A man has just got into the witness-box. He has been subpœned by the plaintiff, and the counsel for the plaintiff examines him.

COUNSEL: 'Now, sir, you are on your oath, and we expect you to speak the truth. Do you understand?'

WITNESS: 'I do.'

COUNSEL: 'I have only one question to put to you. On the 7th June last you went to the defendant's house. What did he say to you?'

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENDANT (*interposing*): 'My Lords, I object to this question being put.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'My Lords, this is essential to the case, and I must beg the Court to allow the question.'

DEFENDANT'S COUNSEL: 'My Lords, as the interests of my client seem to me absolutely bound up in this insidious question I must beg your Lordships to disallow it. It involves a point of privilege.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'I am sorry to be in conflict with my learned friend, but I must insist on examining the witness in my own way.'

DEFENDANT'S COUNSEL: 'I shall bow only to the decision of the Court, and I trust your Lordships will weigh and consider the point. If, after due deliberation, the Court decide for my learned friend, I shall waive my objection, but not until then. My Lords, I am in your hands.'

THE JUDGE: 'As this contention arises from a point that, in the judgment of Counsel, is capital to the case, I think the Bench had better retire for the consideration of it.'

The Bench retires and returns into Court after a lapse of an hour. Breathless attention follows, and the Judges announce that the question can be put.

DEFENDANT'S COUNSEL: 'Very well, my Lords, I bow to the wisdom of the Bench.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL (*to witness*): 'Now, then, sir, on your oath, did you or did you not . . .'

THE JUDGE (*to Counsel*): 'Mr Counsel, is the examination of this witness likely to last long?'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'My Lords, it will entirely depend on the prevarication or truthfulness of the witness.'

JUDGE: 'Then, as it is essential we should gather the evidence without a break, in order to clearly embrace the whole of it, and run no risk of missing a link in the chain, I think we had better adjourn for lunch now, Mr Counsel, instead of suspending the examination just in the middle.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL (*bowing*): 'Very well, my Lords.'

An hour later, on the resumption of proceedings, the witness's examination begins in earnest.

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Well, sir, will you answer to this. On the 7th June last, did you, or did you not, go to the defendant's house?'

WITNESS: 'I did.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL (*gravely*): 'You own it. What took place?'

WITNESS: 'I knocked at the door.'

PLANTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Never mind, sir, about knocking at the door. What did you say?'

WITNESS: 'I asked if he was at home.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Have a care, sir, about what you are saying. Reply without tergiversation.'

WITNESS: 'Without tergiversation?'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Yes, you are on your oath. No tergiversation.'

'WITNESS: 'I do not know what it means.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL (*sternly*): 'It means no shilly-shallying, sir. You do not deny you went to the defendant's house. I knew you had. Now, what did he say?'

WITNESS: 'Nothing.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'No trifling, sir; speak the truth. What did he say, or what did he reply to you? On your oath, do you mean to tell us he said nothing to you?'

WITNESS: 'Nothing.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Indeed! Are you aware there is a punishment for perjury?'

WITNESS: 'I am.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Do you persist in telling us that the defendant said nothing to you?'

WITNESS: 'I do.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Perhaps you will tell the Court what you said to him?'

WITNESS: 'I said nothing to him at all.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'You said nothing to him?'

WITNESS: 'No.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'And he said nothing to you?'

WITNESS: 'No.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Then, in the name of truth, what did you go to his house for? Answer that.'

WITNESS: 'I went to see him.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Ah! At last you own as much. What did you say when you saw him?'

WITNESS: 'I did not see him.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'You mean to say you went to his house and you did not see him? Then, what did you go for?'

WITNESS: 'I went to have lunch.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Well! were you both so engrossed by the pleasure of eating and drinking that both of you were dumb during luncheon?'

WITNESS: 'I had no lunch.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'You went to lunch and had no lunch, you went to see him and did not see him? Will you explain this mystification to the Court?

WITNESS: 'There is no mystification.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'This mystery, then.'

WITNESS: 'There is no mystery, either.'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Then, what in the world did you go to his house for? Cut the matter short, sir.'

WITNESS: 'I went to see him, and lunch with him, and talk with him, but—'

PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL: 'Out with it, sir. But what?'

WITNESS: 'He had gone to Rosherville.'

[*Laughter, in which the Bench joins.*]

DEFENDANT'S COUNSEL: 'After my learned friend's severe examination, my Lords, I will not waste the time of the Court by detaining this intelligent witness in the box.'

LI

FLORIAN'S PASTORALS

FLORIAN, now remembered as the only writer of fables who approaches La Fontaine, was an inveterate versifier. Verses were either trickling from his pen in small driblets, or gushing in voluminous tales, but they ever flowed—flowed without intermission, like water from a copious source. Not a day did he live, after the age of fourteen, without some elucubration more or less lengthy. Pascal had invented an arithmetic machine by which any ordinary sum could be worked out by the mere process of turning a handle. Florian was a live machine, working without a handle, which, instead of pouring out numbers, outpoured poetical strains—odes, epodes, idyls, sonnets, canzonets, madrigals, monodies, elegies, lays, rondelays, anacreontics, fables and pastorals. But the character of all these was, as a rule, one of stereotyped mildness in matter and sweetness in manner. Anyone, after hearing the first lines of a piece of his, could at once exclaim, 'Florian wrote this!'

Marie Antoinette used to say, 'When I read M. de Florian's poetry, I always fancy I am eating *de la soupe au lait*.' For this reason Voltaire called him 'Florianet.'

Pastorals were the kind of composition which Florian liked beyond all others; and the many he wrote were the delight of the sentimental young ladies of the time. They always described fine weather, sweet grass, dainty flowers, shapely trees, murmuring brooks, pretty landscapes, melodious birds, tender shepherds, devoted shepherdesses, gentle dogs, obedient sheep, together with the general harmony which reigned in sweet Nature, and the loving sympathy which united all the mild creatures which tenanted it in happiness and peace. Hence the pretty epigram of De Thiard,—

> Dans un beau roman pastoral,
> Avec tes moutons pèle-mèle,
> Sur un ton bien doux, bien moral,
> Berger, bergère, auteur, tout bèle ;
> Puis bergers, auteur, lecteur, chien,
> S'endorment de moutonnerie.
> Pour réveiller ta bergerie
> Oh ! qu'un petit loup ferait bien.

Florian was a favourite wherever he went. It was safe for him to present himself at any reception without any formal invitation; great ladies had given him the free entry of their drawing-rooms, because he was considered as an antidote against conversational languor, and was pretty sure to enliven a dull afternoon or animate slackening talk by his amiable chatter, his budget of news and gossip, and, if it came to the worst, his reading of the composition he had just finished. When this reading took place, and it was pretty often, the gentlemen present, dreading the duration of the performance and its namby-pamby subject-matter, would cleverly shift their place, move about, and gradually nearing the door, steal away quietly to another room, to return, however, when the hubbub of voices announced the end of the ordeal. The poet, engrossed with his reading, never perceived the retreat and return of the male portion of the company, and accepted, with genuine grace, the compliments

which the absentees paid him on their return. Then the conversation would rattle away.

Once a nobleman, who knew all about it by experience, met Florian in the street. The poet had, on that day, in his huge, outside pockets, a more bulky load of manuscripts than usual.

'Monsieur de Florian,' said the gentleman, 'your precious poems are sticking out of your pockets so invitingly that they would have been stolen long ago, were you not so well known. You may take it as a fact that you are safe even from thieves. They have heard of your pastorals, and they would not rob you of them for the world.'

Florian, unsuspicious of banter, bowed at the compliment, and was not a little astonished and elated at the moral influence his poetry was exercising. He went on writing pastorals, and not one of them was ever stolen from him. The fate of his fables would no doubt, have been different.

LII

SATIRE IN ACTION

SATIRE might be defined as a poisoned spear hurled with deadly force at either vices or men—witness the satires of Juvenal and Dryden. Sometimes it is less murderous, and merely an arrow shot at less serious defects, such are the satires of Horace and Boileau, of Pope and Byron, which were sharp but relatively milder weapons. Again satire may be reduced to the size of an epigram, and inflicts a sting only instead of a wound. Of this light satire countless examples exist. England has probably over twenty thousand. In all cases satirists, epigrammatists, are clever observers, varying in kinds and degrees. Ridicule is the topic and the aim of their attacks, truth their strength, wit their means. And as men are everywhere imperfect, subjects of ridicule abound, and every country can boast of wits who reflect the genius of their nation. After the Greek Simonides, Hipponax and Aristophanes, whose satires were either political or social, we find among the Romans Horace and Martial, who delighted in trifles

(*difficiles nugæ*), and Juvenal, who chastised the society and rulers of his time with fiery outbursts of anger, to which indignation rather than wit gave a force only surpassed by Victor Hugo. The Italians are justly proud of Machiavelli and Aretino; the Spaniards of Cervantes and Quevedo; the Germans of Lessing and Heine; the French of Molière and Voltaire, Piron and Beaumarchais; and England of Butler and Dryden, Swift and Sheridan, Moore and Byron. All those have their respective points of excellence; difference of taste alone proclaims the inferiority or superiority of any of them, so delightful are they all.

Of the epigram, it is a truism to say that the shorter and sharper it is, the more pungent it proves, for it clings better to memory. An epigram is ten times more effective than the longest discourse; it is a stiletto that engraves upon the mind words which are never lost, and may become proverbial. If dictated by envy—a vice which no artifice is ever able to hide because it generally is full of unreasonable exaggeration—an epigram loses much of its power and effect. Dictated by the sense of the ridiculous, it keeps all its vigour and piquancy. Yet, unless it is fitting in matter and manner, it is itself unfit to see the light and live. What is good, therefore, ought never to be a subject of epigrams; goodness of any kind deserves admiration, and as admiration, justly observed Madame de Staël, is certain to be disconcerted by the lightest banter, the epigrammatist should abstain from assailing worth. A wrong subject exposes him to severe reproach. He must bear in mind that, with all the wit in the world, it is extremely difficult to express ridicule so delicately and agreeably as to avoid wounding our sense of propriety. Love of justice made Fontenelle say, 'Although I am eighty, I have never in my life attacked the smallest virtue with the slightest ridicule.' Hence, though epigrammatic wit is solid sometimes, it mostly lives upon trifles and futilities. Wit may be reason adorned, but it often is

the will-o'-the-wisp, 'the glow worm of intellect.' The following are not bad examples of decided hits more or less pungent and merciless. Swift addressed this to Prior, the poet:—

> Sir, I admit your general rule
> That every poet is a fool,
> But you yourself may serve to show it
> That every fool is not a poet.

To another he wrote:—

> You beat your pate, and fancy wit will come:
> Knock as you please, there's nobody at home.

Lessing, to a bridegroom:—

> I saw your recent wedding with surprise;
> She is so deaf!—I thought her dumb likewise,

the reply.

Tom Moore of a poetess who had only one eye:—

> To no one muse does she her glance confine
> But has an eye to all the nine.

Martial, the Roman epigrammatist, shows that the doctors of his time were looked upon as our own were until recent times:—

> A doctor lately was a captain made;
> It is a change of title—not of trade.

Byron was rather severe, too:—

> Society is now one polished horde,
> Formed of two mighty tribes—the Bores and the Bored.

But there are epigrams 'in action' which are just as clever though they are couched in plain prose. These tickle our fancy the more because they are expressed on the spur of the moment. It has been remarked that wit and levity often go together. That was certainly true of Sheridan, and as levity of character produces levity of sentiment, and soon levity of conduct, we find him now and then a little unworthy to stand as a model of be haviour, however worthy of admiration he may be as a wit.

Once after a good dinner, which had enlivened the spirits of the diners, and somewhat thawed the usual formalities of speech and etiquette, Sheridan, rather weak on his legs, was walking along Pall Mall, supported on the one side by a duke, and on the other by a marquess. Arm-in-arm the three merry men went, chatting, talking loud, laughing louder — laying aside all restraint, and equally ready to laugh at passers-by and at each other.

'I say, Duke,' said the Marquess, 'I wonder whether Sheridan is a rogue or a fool? What say you?'

'I should be inclined to declare him a rogue,' answered the Duke.

'Well,' rejoined the Marquess, 'I am inclined to think he is a fool. Sheridan, old fellow, confess, what are you?'

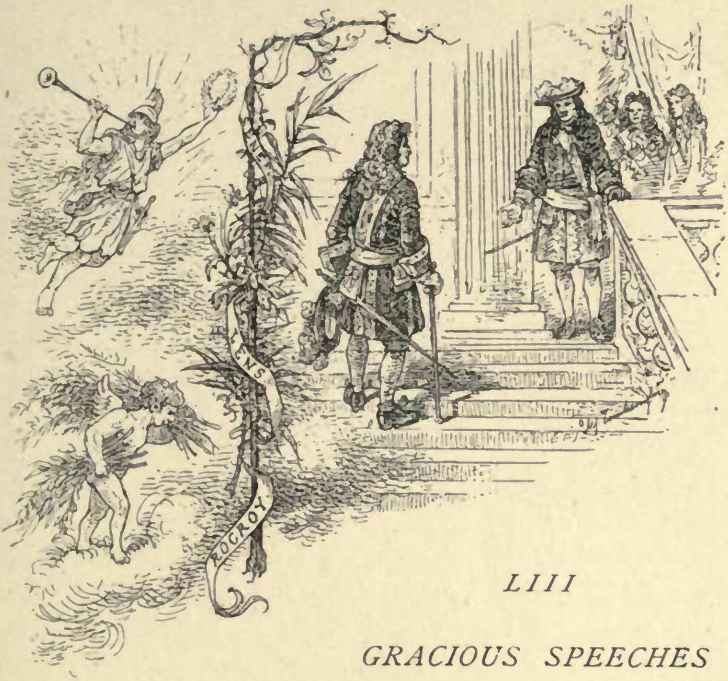
'Well, gentlemen,' said Sheridan, 'to speak candidly, I feel inclined to say I am neither the one nor the other, but just between the two.'

'Hear, hear!' the two others shouted.

This story is well known, but it bears repeating, and a book of anecdotes without it would be incomplete.

Another 'epigram in action,' not very dissimilar from the preceding, refers to Piron. This dramatist was to dine at the house of a banker, and as the company was going to pass into the dining-room, a nobleman stood aside to let Piron go in first, and this one, hesitating, bowed with much courtesy. Perceiving this, the host hastily said to the gentleman of birth, 'Sir Count, he is an author, there is no need for any ceremony.'

Piron, who felt the intended sting, put his hat on and proudly walked in first, saying, 'Since our titles are now known, I beg to take my rank.'



LIII

GRACIOUS SPEECHES

PRINCES, brought up as they are in the midst of the choicest refinement, seem to acquire in a higher degree than other persons the faculty of gracious speech. A volume could easily be filled with examples of this fact.

Louis XIV., who certainly was not prodigal of praise, was as a rule most felicitous in his expressions when a fit opportunity awoke his imagination or stirred his heart more warmly than usual.

When Condé returned to Versailles after the battle of Sénef, the King showed him his appreciation of the great service he had just rendered France by coming out of the Royal apartments and actually standing at the top of the grand staircase to receive him. Prince de Condé, no longer young, and suffering from the gout, was walking with difficulty and ascending the steps very slowly. Half way up he apologised to the King for the slowness of his movements and making His Majesty wait.

'Cousin,' answered the King, 'do not hurry yourself; a person loaded with laurels as you are could not be expected to move very fast.'

It was also a gracious speech, when, after the defeat of Ramillies, he received Villeroi, who had lost the battle, with these simple words, 'Marshal, men of our years are no longer fortunate.'

To Masillon, who had just moved the courtly congregation of the Royal Chapel by one of his eloquent sermons, the King, after the service said, with evident emotion, 'Father, I have heard many great orators in this chapel. I have been highly pleased with them; but for you, whenever I hear you, I go away displeased with myself.'

Passing through the city of Rheims once, the King was congratulated by the Mayor by only a few words, and these, for brevity and sincerity, delightfully contrasted with the heavy addresses that were usual in such circumstances.

'Sire,' said the city magistrate, 'here are our pears, our wine and our hearts: we can offer nothing better to Your Majesty.'

'These are the speeches I like, sir,' replied the King.

The Emperor Charles V. had himself painted several times by the Master of the Venetian School, the matchless Titian, and he delighted to show friendship to the great painter. On one occasion, during a sitting, Titian said with commendable pride, 'This is the third portrait of Your Majesty I have had the honour of painting.'

'You mean, master,' replied the Emperor, 'that you give me immortality for the third time.'

Charles's great rival, Francis I. of France, appreciated art and artists with just as much enthusiasm. He once administered a well-deserved rebuke to his courtiers.

Leonardo da Vinci, who had come over to France at the invitation of the French King, fell dangerously ill

and Francis I., the most urbane of princes, almost daily visited the patient to comfort him. The courtiers, who considered a man of birth a far more important personage than a man of genius, were not slow in expressing their surprise at their master's condescension. Francis at once humbled their haughty pride and silenced their proud objections.

'You are surprised,' he said, 'at the honour I pay to this admirable painter? But learn to make a right estimate of his value—and your own. I can make any day I please such lords as you, but God alone can make such a man as Leonardo da Vinci.'

The stately courtiers have long been forgotten even by name, but Leonardo lives in his immortal works and will gain additional glory in every age. Francis's gracious acknowledgment of his genius does equal honour to the royal speaker and the subject of his praise.

It was a magnanimous and gracious speech, too, that of Prince Eugène to Marshal Boufflers after the surrender of Lille. The fortress had been defended with such heroic valour and endurance that, when famine at last caused its fall, Prince Eugène said to Boufflers, 'I have too much glory in this achievement. Had fortune given me my choice, I would rather have defended the place in the manner you have done, than have taken it as I did.'

Equally fine and generous to a rival was his speech when, at Marlborough's death, he received the great English's captain's sword which had been bequeathed to him. This mark of his rival's esteem deeply touched him. When it was presented to him, he drew it, and flourishing it in the air, he exclaimed, 'Behold the sword which I have followed through the whole of this long war!'

But of course these gracious expressions are not confined to princes. Few are the persons of note who have been unable to give utterance to words that are worth recording. Marlborough once led his army across

Germany to join the Imperial army on the Danube. Prince Eugène, surprised at the splendid condition of his soldiers after a long and severe march, exclaimed enthusiastically, 'My Lord, I never saw stronger horses, or men better clad and equipped. All this, however, can be done for money; but money cannot possibly buy the valour that shines in your soldiers' countenances.'

'If what you remark be true,' answered the English general, 'it is easily accounted for. My soldiers know before whom they stand; their intrepid looks are inspired by Your Highness's presence.'

It would not be difficult to multiply instances of the same kind. The witty Duchess of Maine asked her numerous company one evening, 'What is the difference between me and a clock?'

No one present would venture upon giving an answer; but as soon as Fontenelle, who came in late, heard the question: 'The difference,' he said, 'between you and a clock is this. A clock marks the hours, but your Grace makes us forget them.'

Once Voltaire was admiring Vernet's pictures, and praising the truth and brightness of the colours.

'They are true and brilliant enough,' said the modest Vernet, 'but my colours have nothing that can be compared with your ink.'

The famous Duke de Grammond was one of those speakers who can combine point, energy, brevity and grace. He went to Spain as a special envoy to ask the Infanta in marriage for the King of France.

'Sire,' said he, to Philip IV., 'my master gives you peace;' and turning to the princess, he added, 'and to you, madam, he gives his heart and his crown!'

LIV

THE REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNAL

To be a nobleman or a priest was, during the Reign of Terror, sufficient to be arrested, and nine times out of ten to be sent to the guillotine. Sometimes, too, the mere appearance of one being well-to-do, or exhibiting something like expensive habits, carried into the crazy minds of the beholders the suspicion that they had before them one of those plotters against the liberties of the emancipated and 'sovereign people.' For how was it possible for anyone to express contempt for a free nation by more visible evidence than extravagance? When Condorcet was fleeing for his life across the country, hiding in woods during the day and walking during the night towards the frontier, not daring to pass through towns or villages, he was at last so feeble from want of rest and food that, at all hazard, he ventured upon entering a village at sunrise to obtain a meal. He went into an inn for that purpose, and was asked what he would have.

'An omelet will do,' he replied.

'How large shall we make it, citizen?'

He, who had always had servants around him, and had no idea of the number of eggs that were wanted for an omelet, said, 'Make it with a dozen eggs.'

The bystanders opened wide their eyes at this unheard-of order of a twelve-egg omelet for one, and made no doubt they were face to face with an enemy of the Republic. They at once ordered him to show his passport, and as he could not produce one he was immediately arrested as a bloodthirsty aristocrat, and, amidst boisterous and joyful shouts of exultation, flung into a wretched cell. A few days later he had released himself by poison.

Roland underwent a still more dreadful fate. During his flight and wandering through the country he was devoured by wolves! Thus ended many men who had hailed the Revolution with intense joy! Of those who had endeavoured to stay the course of the Revolution, very few, once they had been arrested, made efforts to escape, so convinced were they that appeals to justice would not be listened to. And the Revolutionary Tribunal showed in many cases a ghastly, and at the same time an almost grotesque, zeal to deal wholesale punishment at random.

When the Marquess de St Cyr, against whom no tangible accusation could have been formulated, was, like so many of his Order, brought in his turn before the Revolutionary Tribunal, he was asked his name.

'My name is Monsieur—'

He was at once interrupted.

'There are,' said the President, 'no more messieurs but only citizens. Just give your name.'

'Then,' resumed the nobleman, 'my name is the Marquess—'

He was again stopped.

'There are no marquesses, titles have been suppressed. We are all equal. Your name?

'Well then,' the gentleman rejoined, 'my name is De—'

Once more he was cut short.

'De? What do you mean? Are you not aware that the particle of nobility has been done away with? Give us your name without such preliminary fooleries.'

'In that case, then,' said the Marquess, 'my name is Saint—'

'Stop,' shouted the President, 'what comedy is this? There are no more saints; religion is abolished, as you know. Will you or will you not give us your name purely and simply?'

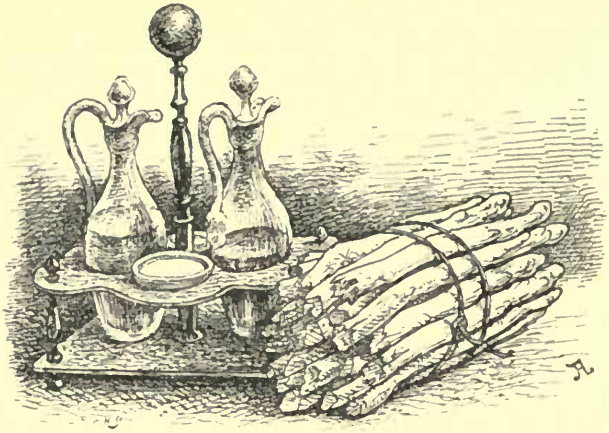
'Well, then, my name is Cyr.'

'Sire!' again shouted the representative of the people, 'we have abolished monarchy, and there are no more sires than kings, royalties or majesties, but the French Republic, one and indivisible, and there is no sovereign but the people. Once more tell your name.'

'I have no other,' replied the Marquess.'

'Well then, you have no name and are no better than a vagrant,' thundered the President, 'a vagrant of the most dangerous type, for your last few words have revealed the very worst propensities. Go and get your deserts as an enemy of the people, an aristocrat and a royalist.'

And the Marquess left the court, got into the fatal cart, and died the dignified death of a noble victim.



LV

ASPARAGUS

MOST of those who have heard of Fontenelle, Carneille's nephew, know that he passed for a sage. He will always be remembered, not perhaps as one of the influential writers of last century but as a man of practical wit. He it was who said, 'If I had my hand full of truths I would not open it'—a saying which made him the opposite of Voltaire, who, regardless of the Bastille, went in for the expression of truth at all times, and at all risks. Fontenelle is also known to have said to a friend, 'Do not speak so loud about my age, for Death might hear you, and I think he has forgotten me.'

But there are anecdotes about him, not generally known, which reveal his whole character. The old lady who was so indifferent to the countless calamities which had assailed mankind in her lifetime, but completely broke down when her canary died, was not the only person who saw with equanimity the misfortunes human flesh is heir to.

Fontenelle attained extreme old age through the Lucretian view which he took of the world. His fortitude in serenely putting up with anything that happened never deserted him for a moment. He had an unfailing

faculty—that of steeling his heart against emotion and setting his teeth against feelings which might accelerate his pulse. To him the whole earth was a sort of Eden, of which he himself was the happy possessor. Need we say he was selfish?

But there is selfishness and selfishness. If we are all more or less selfish, very few believe that the world begins and ends in themselves. The thoroughly selfish man lives and thinks as if men were not tied by nature to their families and their nation, and as if he owed nothing to society. He is not unlike a leaf that would fancy itself the oak. Love and friendship alone could soften his defect; but the selfish man has seldom a friend or an affection. Unlike all other passions, which become feebler as years roll on, selfishness and its corollary avarice increase with old age, and old age only makes these two vices more imperious. This was the case with Fontenelle.

He had another failing: he was fond of good cheer —though never to excess. We ought not perhaps to condemn greediness altogether, although it is a fault just as degrading as sobriety is an eminent quality. For in villages and rural districts, greediness is not an unmixed evil. If it cannot be considered a commendable social virtue, it often is the only means of grouping together, and of softening, rough minds and untractable characters. It may produce sociability, moderate resentment, and even extinguish hatred. A public banquet—and the more copious the better for the purpose—will bring about a conciliating spirit which other means would be powerless to foster. Roman families used to have a yearly banquet with the view of reconciling all their members with one another. If the most cohesive nation recognised this as a practical necessity, we may well imitate it. In other cases, however, 'Greediness is,' as Rousseau said, 'the vice of heartless men.' How did it stand with Fontenelle? This epicurean once received

from the country, as a present, a basket full of fine asparagus, of which he was known to be particularly fond. The quantity was sufficient for at least two dinners, but as they would have lost their freshness by keeping for another twenty-four hours, Fontenelle regretfully invited his most intimate friend, whom he knew to be as fond of asparagus as himself, to come and share them with him at dinner.

'I know,' he said to him, 'that you like them with oil but could you not for once eat them with melted butter like myself?'

'My friend,' replied the guest, 'I could not eat one otherwise than with oil, I am sorry to say.'

Fontenelle seeing, by his friend's want of gastronomical education, the possible chance of taking the lion's share slip by, resigned himself to the inevitable and said, 'Very well, one half will be prepared with oil, the other half with melted butter.' The dainty delicacy was to be served just after the soup. At the appointed time, the two friends sat down and began to take a delicious broth with great gusto. Fontenelle had finished this before his friend had gone through half of it, as a glance sufficed to show. Raising his eyes to his guest, Fontenelle saw him sitting upright in his armchair in a rather rigid attitude, with his spoon in his plate, and without lifting it to his mouth.

'What is the matter?' said Fontenelle. 'Don't you like the soup, or are you sparing your appetite for the asparagus?'—No answer. 'Well, why don't you speak?'—No answer. 'I say, are you dumb?'—No answer.

The host then got up to ring the bell, and on his way tapped his friend on the shoulder, saying, 'Well, we shall have this taken away.' — No sign, no reply. And realising that his guest had perhaps fainted, he looked into his eyes, and saw in them an unusual film. He shook his friend—he was motionless. He took his

hand—it was stiff. 'Good gracious!' exclaimed Fontenelle, 'he is dead!'

And in truth his guest had died from a sudden fit of apoplexy. Fontenelle then made a precipitate rush to the door and shouted, 'Cook, make all the asparagus with melted butter!' And when he had eaten as many as he could, opposite his dead friend, he had the latter put into a conveyance and taken home.

We need hardly wonder that, to a friend who asked him how he was getting on, he should have answered with his wonted cheerfulness, 'Thanks! but I have just heard of the death of your good old gossip.'

'Who do you mean?' inquired the other, with concern.

'My father, I mean,' was the reply.

Nor need we marvel that Fontenelle prolonged his life until he was one hundred! We all know of the sweet man who never laughed in his life except on the occasion of his brother breaking his leg—who could decide whether he or sweet Fontenelle, who ate with relish his departed friend's asparagus, would have carried off the prize for amiability?

LVI

HE WOULD NOT FIGHT

MORAL ugliness causes nothing but contempt and detestation. Physical ugliness rather attracts the good-will, and enlists the indulgence of all right-minded people. Kindliness awakens in most of us a feeling akin to sympathy if not commiseration, akin to charity if not pity, for those who are afflicted with unusual homeliness. Plainness, ugliness, is a source of much unhappiness and pain in a woman. It is the constant trial and mortification of her life—a daily, hourly pang inflicted by nature, from which old age alone partially relieves her. Her infancy is embittered, her girlhood cheerless, her womanhood wretched by this misfortune, which takes away all chance of wifehood and motherhood and condemns her to solitude. If she has goodness, intellect, wit, she finds in these qualities a

compensation that makes her existence tolerable, and even cheerful, because she will have friends at once sympathetic and devoted; but, when these natural privileges are wanting, then, as unselfish people compose a small minority, she is never cherished, hardly ever welcomed, still less sought after, often laughed at, always slighted, and her natural defect is a hundred times more cruel and less bearable than greater ugliness is to a man. The ugliest of men is never disliked if he has the least intellectual gift or culture. Nay, an ugly man may, despite his features, be just as vain as men gifted with good looks, and, that vanity may go to great lengths in him, is well illustrated by the following example.

Two French noblemen, M. de Langerie and M. de Mantande, had a quarrel, and, although it was about a trifling matter, they determined to fight. Each opponent, accompanied by his seconds, came to the ground at the appointed time. M. de Langerie, after the usual greeting to his opponent's seconds, turned to M. de Mantande and gave him a courteous bow. As he was in the act of saluting he naturally looked M. de Mantande in the face, and in a mute attitude, somewhat indicative of astonishment, stared at him as though he had never seen him before. Then suddenly, as if struck by a powerful idea, and irresistibly impelled by it: 'Sir,' said he to M. de Mantande, 'I most humbly beg to tender you my apology.'

His seconds thought him crazy, and came to him. 'What! you, the offended party, apologise,' said one of them in a low tone, 'after having declined all our suggestions for a reconciliation? What is the matter?'

Meanwhile M. de Mantande had bowed and said, 'I accept your apology, sir, but on the condition that we shall be friends, and that you will tell me what so suddenly made you alter your mind.

'Gentlemen,' said M. de Langerie, 'since we are

now all friends, and I may speak candidly, I need not hesitate to tell you. I apologised because, if I had had the good fortune to kill M. de Mantande, I should have the misfortune to remain the ugliest man in the kingdom.'

The effect of this confession may be imagined. The six friends laughed heartily, and returned home in the same carriage to a good dinner.

LVII

CONCEIT VERSUS GENIUS

VANITY has been blamed ever since Solomon; all the moralists of the last three thousand years have shown its hollowness, and yet it is more than ever the pet folly of mankind. What has not been said about it, from Confucius, Thales and Epictetus, down to Bossuet and Thackeray? It is universally condemned and despised, and it reigns universally. A noble pride is often based upon real virtue, and is oftener still dictated by consciousness of merit or human dignity. It must not therefore be confounded with presumption, ostentation or arrogance. A proud man may remain simple and modest in his tone and manner, and may guard himself against appearing self-satisfied. His pride may conduce to the performance of admirable deeds. The vain man is, on the other hand, so engrossed with his own qualities that the less merit he possesses the greater will be his pretensions and self-importance. It has been justly said by a philosopher that 'There is no man so empty as the one who is full of himself.' Countless kinds of vanity exist, and in each variety countless degrees are exhibited. When it impels men to do works of philanthropy we

forgive vanity for its results: a man who has done good in order to acquire notoriety, has not been actuated by the noblest spring of action, and yet he may inspire admiration and not simply indulgence and forgiveness. Between that kind of vanity and the least defensible there are infinite gradations. Of all foibles it is the most personal, for the chief admirer of a vain man is always himself. Of all defects it is that which is fed most by outside facts: rich men are vain because of their money, noblemen because of their birth, officials because of their functions, women because of their beauty, soldiers because of their uniform, coachmen because of their horses, servants because of their liveries, singers because of their voice, musicians because of their instruments, actors because of plaudits, worldlings because of newspaper paragraphs describing the splendours of the entertainments they provide — never because of their personal merits, since the first quality of merit is modesty. Desire of being admired and envied is the main incentive in all cases. No greater punishment can be inflicted on vain men and women than cold silence or plain truth about themselves—praise and compliments are the sole gratification they care for. Vanity is also the most dangerous of defects, for it often hides real qualities, and generally reveals hidden faults. If it does not extinguish virtue, it certainly taints its purity. All this is known and felt, yet most of us have a share of vanity, and therefore are its frequent victims, because ridicule and raillery walk in its train. Whence is the cure to come?

Considering the beam which each of us has in his eye, it would be difficult to award the palm of vanity. We might possibly agree that men of science are least tinged with it; but we should find it impossible to say what set of human beings are most conspicuously afflicted. Some would say actors are, because the loud applause which spontaneously breaks forth in recognition of their

cleverness gives them an exaggerated idea of their gifts. Others would say singers, for the same reason; some would say jockeys, who share the same delusion on account of the tumultuous hurrahs and irrepressible enthusiasm which salute their victories. Other judges, more humorous, would perhaps give the prize for vanity to drum-majors whose majesty discloses conscious greatness, or, from their gravity and evident self-complacency, to those members of perambulating bands, who beat the big drum right and left, with that unadulterated earnestness of conviction, aided by revolving wrists, which the resonance of a stretched ass skin is capable of stirring up in the human breast.

What is certain is that all professions number thousands of slaves to vanity. Another thing is equally clear: the greater the genius the less vanity accompanies it, the smaller the talent the larger share of the darling passion. We may give one single instance of this axiom, which will fit most of us.

Jervas, who was more presumptuous than great as an artist, was tormented by the wish to ascertain how far his pictures equalled, or surpassed, the best works of the Italian masters. Although he had intuitive convictions on the subject, yet he wanted to be just, and in order to be just, he would quietly but fairly compete with the most celebrated genius of the Venetian School. He therefore made a copy of one of Titian's finest paintings, to fight on equal grounds. When this was finished he hung the copy and the original side by side, covered both with a cloth to protect them from the dust, and went away for a week, so that, by dint of rest, he should have 'a fresh eye' to view the two works with absolute impartiality. When he returned, he walked to the pictures, uncovered them with his eyes shut, so as to avoid seeing them until the proper moment, and having drawn back a few paces in front of them, he suddenly opened his eyes to view them together. Then, with keenest

delight, he gave vent to his admiration, and said, 'Ha! poor Tit, how you would stare if you could only see this!'

Alas, for human blindness! Are we not, most of us, like poor Jervas as regards our own performances?

Ancient artists were not exempt from the same failing. It is related that a conceited painter had such a high opinion of himself, that he freely found fault with the works of the greatest masters. He criticised the exceeding purity of outline which made Parrhasius famous; the dramatic power, delicate beauty and warmth of colour of Zeuxis; the dignity of attitude of Euphranor's heroes and Graces; the moving expression of Aristides's warriors; the exquisite grace of Apelles's lovely Venus rising from the sea. None but his own compositions pleased him. In his presumption, wishing to humiliate the last-named master, whose rapid workmanship and laborious life gave rise to the proverb, 'Nulla dies sine linea'—not a day without work—he showed him a Venus of his own, painted in a dress of superb embroidery, saying to Apelles, 'You alone may have the right of painting Alexander, but what is your opinion of this picture? You see my Venus's face; I have not veiled it, so as to escape the difficulty of representing her luminous features, as Timanthes would no doubt have done.'

'I see,' replied Apelles; 'you show her face, it is true, but you have concealed her divine form. Knowing you were incapable of rendering the supreme loveliness of the goddess and making her beautiful from her feet to her neck, you have made her gaudy. This is the usual way with beginners.'

It was a harsh but, under the circumstances, a merited rebuke.

LVIII

WIT AND BEAUTY

It would require a clever Parliament and a lengthy debate to establish the supremacy of claim between the two paramount gifts which enlist the human sympathies in the highest degree—we allude to wit and beauty. The first point that would engross attention is whether they are inherent in the nature of man, or whether they are the effects of 'natural selection.' The ordinary thinker would be ready to assert that they are endowments dispensed by the caprice of nature, whereas modern philosophers would pronounce them to be evolutional results. The second point that would next demand consideration is, whether one of these gifts exercises its sway over a larger number of men, apart from the intensity of its influence as a power. Here again opinions would be strongly divided:—worldlings would unanimously declare that Beauty is the queen of a wider kingdom than Wit; whereas intellectual men and women would

aver the contrary—for Beauty can only rule over those who actually behold it—a limited number—besides which it is transient; whereas Wit, though ruling over hearers and readers only, endures for ever, and is felt by successive generations.

Leaving these questions to competent moralists, we may, at all events, note the main features of both these attractive qualities.

Very striking are the different definitions of beauty given by various philosophers. 'Beauty,' said Plato, 'is a privilege of nature.' 'It is the best of recommendations,' said Diogenes. 'It is a sovereign which stands in need of no friend,' said Carneades. 'It is the gift of fair appearance,' said Aristotle. 'Beauty,' Socrates said, 'is a short-lived tyranny.' 'It is a silent deceit,' said Theophrastus. 'An ivory mischief,' added Theocritus. To all these views, which are true and sufficient, the moderns have added but little; they have only repeated them in different words, and furnished illustrations of each. And there was immense scope for illustration, since each nation presents distinct types, each period has certain predilections for a particular species of beauty, and each man a particular taste of his own. There is, however, a consensus of opinion, a concordance of agreement. Beauty without moral qualities, without feeling, without mind, might be called 'blank' beauty, and resembles a lovely flower without perfume. Beauty with wicked instincts, a foolish mind and a stinging tongue, resembles a flower perfumed but poisonous. Beauty accompanied by nobleness of heart, elevation of intellect and sweetness of speech, is, indeed, irresistibly loveable and powerful. No disagreement exists on those three points.

When, on the other hand, people speak of Wit, they clearly understand the faculty of the mind which enables one to clothe a bright thought in brilliant

language, and never confound it with the mind itself, whose power is almost boundless, and which embraces all that is intellectual. Thus limited, Wit addresses everyone and constitutes a pleasure which all can enjoy. But to appeal to our understanding universally, it must avoid paradox—otherwise reflection enables us to detect its hollowness, and destroys the charm it might otherwise possess. It is as varied as circumstances, and has, therefore, an almost infinite field for its display.

'It is useful to everyone,' says Talleyrand, 'but is insufficient for everything.'

It is rather an ornament than a solid quality. Yet few will succeed or reign in the world without it.

'There is no wit without judgment,' said Pope; and we may add, no raillery without refinement, no playful vivacity without decency.

And as sparks are caused by the shock of crystals with one another, so wit will flash from the contact of intellects. It wants freedom of intercourse, society, animation. If stilted, or strained, or far-fetched, it ceases to be agreeable: aiming at being witty often results in failure, and provokes ridicule. Wit should be natural, and natural wit expressed with *simplicity* is the most seductive. It often shines at the expense of kindliness, and the witty satirist will inspire apprehension oftener than he will cause pleasure—hence Pope very justly said, 'Certain men have a good deal of wit, and yet not enough to govern it.'

A witty woman, devoid of beauty, attracts vastly more than a mere beauty; happy is that woman who unites wit and loveliness. There were two such women once, and the best evidence of the genuiness of their mental gifts was that they were attached to each other. There is a pretty little anecdote about them which it would be difficult to match.

Under the first Empire, Madame de Staël, the

great French authoress, and Madame Récamier, one of the most beautiful women in Europe, were taking a walk in the Tuileries garden, when they met Prince de Laval. The Prince saluted the ladies and begged the favour of accompanying them—a privilege which was, of course, graciously granted. The trio resumed their promenade — the Prince walking in the middle—and to open the conversation in a manner at once brilliant and complimentary, 'Ladies,' he said, 'this is, indeed, a delight! I shall be envied by all Paris! A simple mortal like me to be thus walking between Wit and Beauty!'

'You take me for a fool, then?' at once said Madame Récamier.

'And me for a fright?' exclaimed Madame de Staël.

And the three friends indulged in genuine laughter, each inwardly admiring the wit of the others.

This true story has received a somewhat different version, and many would be puzzled to say whether this version is not just as good as the original.

It is related that the poet Fontanes, who was exceedingly fond of ladies' society, was once sitting at dinner between these two celebrated women, and said to them, 'I am the most fortunate of men to be thus between Beauty and Wit.'

'And without possessing either the one or the other,' slyly replied Madame de Staël.

'And not likely to,' added Madame Récamier.

'Time and posterity will say,' rejoined Fontanes, with a smile, not devoid of deep meaning.

And the dinner mirthfully proceeded.

LIX

LACONIC SPEECHES

TRUE eloquence, as great orators have often said and shown, flows straight from the soul. For it to touch us to the quick it must exclude artifice and paradox. Truth alone gives it irresistible strength. A Demosthenes, a Cicero, a Mirabeau, carry everything before them by the weight of their strong argument and magnificent language, but it is questionable whether a laconic speech does not appeal more to imagination and feeling than grand orations. It certainly comes home more directly to the hearts of men from the fact that its naked simplicity conveys one single sentiment, and hence, one single powerful impression. The 'Come and take them' of Leonidas, the 'Strike me but hear me' of Themistocles, the 'Stand out from my sunshine' of Diogenes, the '*Veni, Vidi, Vici*' of Cæsar, which everyone remembers, contain more sublimity than any lengthy discourse. The ancients, however, have been equalled by the moderns in this respect, whether we weigh the momentous occasions upon which striking words were

called forth, or whether we consider the noble energy of laconic expression.

Lysander and Nelson hit upon exactly the same argument in almost similar circumstances, and we may be sure that the modern hero had not the Greek hero in his mind when he pithily spoke. A Persian general wrote to Lysander, 'If I enter Greece, fire and sword shall make it a wilderness.'

'If,' simply replied the Spartan.

When Captain Berry understood the manœuvre of Nelson at the battle of the Nile, he said, 'If we succeed, what will the world say?'

'There's no *if* in the case,' quickly replied Nelson.

What speech, too, was his signal at Trafalgar: 'England expects every man to do his duty,' upon which a shout of enthusiastic admiration and patriotism burst forth from every English deck, and was wafted across the broad sea!

French heroism shines with equal brilliancy. Bonaparte, in Egypt, makes his troops invincible by a few words.

'Soldiers,' he said, just before the rush of the enemy, 'from the summit of those pyramids forty ages are looking upon you!' and a splendid victory was added to the roll of great deeds.

Is not the genius of each nation characterised in both these examples: Napoleon invoked Glory, Nelson invoked Duty.

Our Middle Ages, barbarous times as they were, offer many examples of laconic terseness, strength of character, and lofty nobleness, especially from the eleventh century downwards.

'Soldiers!' cried William the Conquerer, after landing his army, and burning his ships, 'behold your country!'

Later, when the Constable of France, Bourbon, lay mortally wounded in the assault of the City of Rome, soldiers passing by the tree against which he was breathing his last, were asking one another whether it was true that their leader was killed.

'No,' he shouted, 'Bourbon is gone forward!'

In more modern times Henry of Navarre, in true laconic style, shouted to his troops arrayed for battle, 'I am your King; you are Frenchmen; behold the enemy!' And on another occasion, he again communicated his own ardour to his small army by a curt and noble speech, 'Children,' said he, riding along the ranks, and pointing to the snow-white plumes which adorned his helmet, 'if your standards are lost, this is the rallying sign that will lead you to victory!'

The Commander-in-chief of the Royalists in the Vendée, La Rochejacquelein, who displayed so much talent and valour against the Republican army, cried to his peasant soldiers before the battle of Nouaillé, 'Friends, if I advance, follow me; if I draw back, kill me; if I die, avenge me.' And he met his death at the head of his devoted levies.

Coming down from those heights, we find curious instances of laconism, less impressive by far, certainly, yet admirable in their unadorned, we had almost said, inarticulate brevity.

In the tremendous battles fought under Napoleon against the armies of Austria, Prussia, Russia, French soldiers had only to look at their officers to gain impetuous confidence. In a decisive charge against a solid mass of infantry, the cavalry colonel, Nansouty, who handled the sword better than eloquence, rode to the forefront of his squadrons. and brandishing his sabre, shouted, 'Cuirassiers — Cuirassiers —' and, as nothing would come out, he ejaculated, 'Cuirassiers — I'll race you all! Forward!' and on they rushed after their commander, who was first in the thick of the enemy.

Of nearly the same kind is the authentically well-known humorous mock auction sale to carry the redoubts of Reischoffen and Freischwiller, bristling with cannon. Hoche, who united the coolness of the consummate leader

with the dash of the bravest soldier, after several attempts to capture the deadly heights, headed the storming battalions for a final assault, and shouted, as he rushed forward, 'Comrades! Artillery for sale! 600 francs per cannon! Going! going! gone!'—The Austrian guns were captured, and the general gave 600 francs for each piece to the soldiers who had taken it.

It may well be asked whether ladies are gifted in the same degree as men with this faculty of expressing a world of thoughts in a few words; that they excel in outpouring volumes of speech with far more readiness than their husbands or brothers is too well acknowledged to require new evidence. But one lady, at least, has been known to match the most laconic of men. Dr Abernethy, whose mode of speech was proverbially curt, was called to see a lady who had been hurt by a pet animal. On entering her room he said, 'Scratch?'

'Bite,' she replied.

'Cat?' he inquired.

'Dog,' she answered.

And he was so astonished that he made a long speech in her honour.

'Madam,' said he, 'you are the wittiest of women.'

LX

EXTEMPORE ORATION

THE poet Boileau, had a brother in holy orders who was scarcely inferior to him in wit; so far, at least, as refined readiness in speech went. The Abbé Boileau, as this ecclesiastic was called, was Dean of the Cathedral at Sens, and his position entitled him to speak on public occasions.

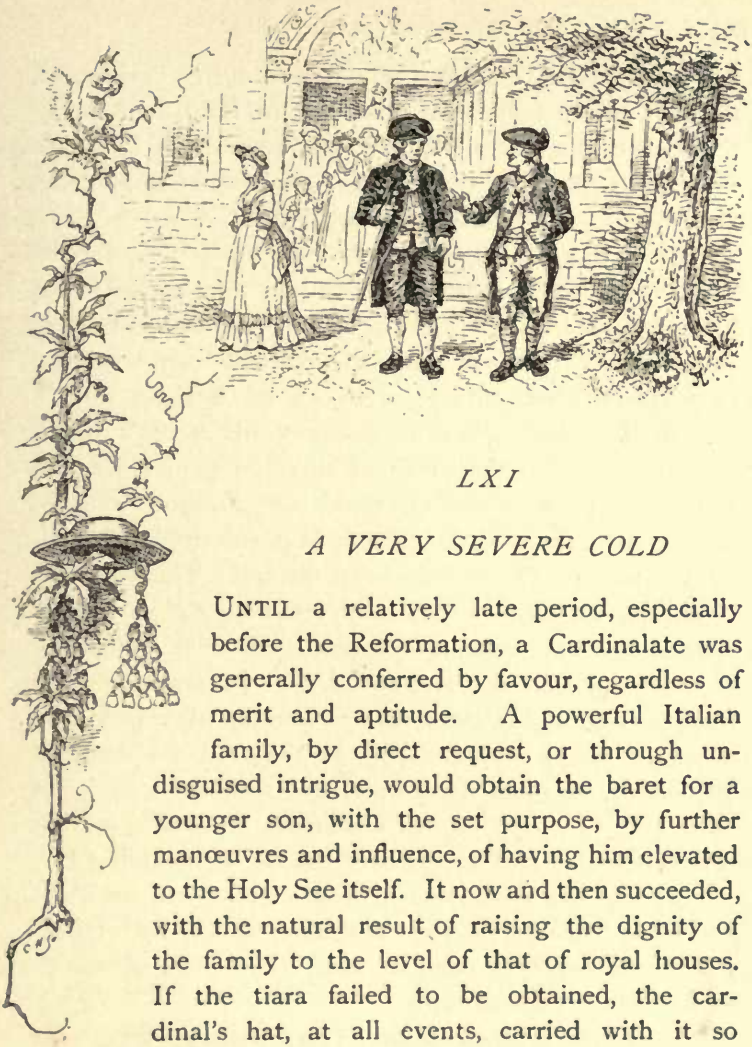
The Sens clergy felt proud in possessing such a dean, for his eloquence, indeed, qualified him to be a worthy representative spokesman of an influential body. Not that he was celebrated as a speaker, or by any means equal to the famous pulpit orators of his times: no one could rival a Bossuet in majesty and strength, a Fénélon in persuasion and grace, a Bourdalone in gravity and logic, a Massillon in abundance and pathos, or a Fléchier in harmony and elegance, but yet

Abbé Boileau's oratory was such as forcibly appeals to the mind and the heart, and, fortified with learning, carries emotion and conviction into every soul. Be that as it may, an anecdote about him is on record which proved his presence of mind in a difficult circumstance.

Once the great Condé, who had ended the Thirty Years' War by his heroic victories of Rocroy, Fribourg, Nordlingen, Lens, and who, later on, was to beat the Prince of Orange at Sénef, entered the city of Sens in state, and public bodies vied with one another in presenting him with complimentary addresses. The clergy, of course, took part in the function, and Abbé Boileau, who had composed a fit oration, was going to deliver it. The Prince, whose taste was as sound as his valour, and who was gifted with a good deal of wit, was probably bored by the ordeal to which he was being subjected, for he bent forward as if he were unlikely to follow distinctly the periods of the orator, but, in reality, to put the speaker out of countenance, and thereby shorten his own punishment. The Abbé, who had heard of the Prince's humour, guessed his purpose, and, feigning irrepressible agitation to be thus facing one of the great captains of the age, began his discourse with visible embarrassment.

'Your Highness need hardly be surprised at seeing me so nervous and so much fluttered on appearing before you, at the head of these inoffensive ecclesiastics, for, if I were facing you at the head of a large army, I should tremble even more than I do now.'

The Prince de Condé smiled most affably, and was so pleased with the orator for his speech that he invited him to dinner—an honour which was as uncommon as it was prized.



LXI

A VERY SEVERE COLD

UNTIL a relatively late period, especially before the Reformation, a Cardinalate was generally conferred by favour, regardless of merit and aptitude. A powerful Italian family, by direct request, or through undisguised intrigue, would obtain the baret for a younger son, with the set purpose, by further manœuvres and influence, of having him elevated to the Holy See itself. It now and then succeeded, with the natural result of raising the dignity of the family to the level of that of royal houses. If the tiara failed to be obtained, the cardinal's hat, at all events, carried with it so much honour and so many privileges, that it was, next to a throne, the highest ambition of a great family. Young nobles, with no more vocation or qualification than their friends had when entering the career of arms, would thus scale the steps of the papal throne before they were twenty-five years of age. Cardinals were often very much younger. Until lately, in this country, a younger son who had failed in his studies and could not enter a learned profession, could easily enter into

the army, the Church, sometimes even Parliament, through family influence. Likewise, in Italy, it occurred that when the scion of a noble house was likely to distinguish himself in no career, his parents would say, 'Let us try to make a cardinal of him.'

Since the onslaught of Luther upon the ancient Church and the partial crash of the ecclesiastical hierarchy which followed it, young cardinals became comparatively scarce; but the cardinalate continued in frequent cases to be an object of intrigue and a matter of favour. Men of wealth would have a better chance of success than men of merit or genius, because the latter, even if willing, could not, through want of means, compete with the former in promoting their self-advancement. The baret cost a fortune. The expenses of enthronisation amounted to no less than £4000. There were customary gifts to be bestowed, then obligatory presents, costs for the ceremonial, fees for representation, State duties, and a more or less lengthy stay in Rome, involving heavy outlay. And as the 'red hat' brought an income of some £900 only, the recipient could not expect it to cover all his advances; so that none but rich candidates had hardly any chance of obtaining it.

All this has undergone a great change, but until the end of last century, restless ambition, backed by intrigue, would often carry a man of birth or a man of wealth as high as he could desire.

A French archbishop of a very ordinary type went to Rome in the hope of being made a prince of the Church. His retinue was lordly, his expenses princely, and he flattered himself that he would reach the goal of his ambition—the more so because, for months, he daily repaired to the Vatican to become better known to His Holiness. Despite his personal charm, dutiful perseverance, assiduous court and outward show, his expectations were not realised; he returned to his See an archbishop as before, without causing much surprise to those who

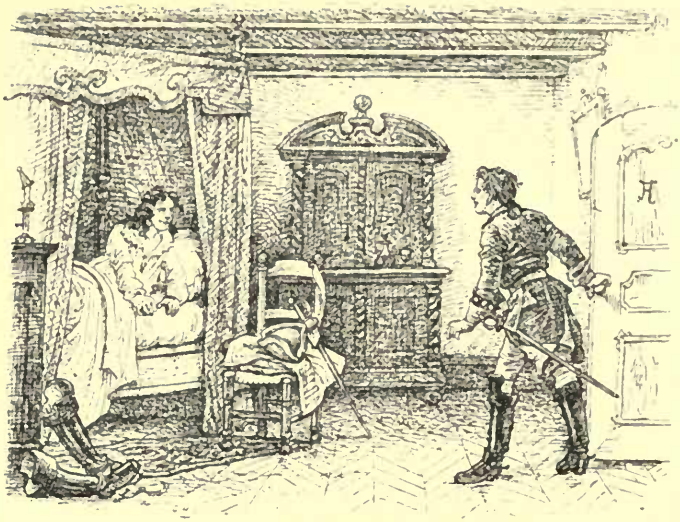
knew him well, for they were fully aware that his ambition far surpassed his abilities.

On the Sunday after his return, he preached a long sermon, the manner of which was unfortunately much marred by his constant sneezing.

'That was a fine sermon,' said a gentleman to some friends on leaving the church at the end of the service, 'but our Archbishop seems to have caught a dreadful cold in the head.'

'Indeed he has,' answered someone, 'and no wonder, for he had a long journey, and unfortunately left his hat in Rome.'

This good-natured reply came from one who happened to enjoy a certain intimacy with the prelate. Did he feel an inward pleasure at the disappointment of the churchman according to La Rochefoucauld's aphorism?



LXII

THE LAZY AIDE-DE-CAMP

YOUNG noblemen, a couple of centuries ago, like the young Roman nobles of old, learnt the art of war by the side of a commander — a friend of their family — who attached them to his person as junior *aides-de-camp*, and, by practice, taught them the different duties and requirements of the service. Under Louis XIV. these scions of great houses were not bound by any of the rules of discipline which are necessary in an army. They were volunteers, and, as such, took almost as much or as little duty as they pleased, the general smiling good-humouredly at their freaks if they showed more zeal for pleasure than for the hardships of war. Some of them being very wealthy and highly connected, went into the army with a retinue of attendants and servants, baggage, and a number of horses, which would have been more than sufficient for a prince of the blood. They were as ready for a battle as for a ball, and, if fighting took place, they charged with a gallantry that generally exhibited more rashness than

military wisdom. Now and then they would spend the night at some entertainment; for, as ladies made it a point to leave the Court to visit their husbands' relatives and friends during a campaign, grand dinners and balls often engrossed the minds of the officers, and these made the most of such opportunities to relieve themselves of the usual monotony of camp life. And this was not all; for again, whole nights were consumed in the excitement of drinking, supping and gambling, so that it frequently happened that young noblemen, after such spells of dissipation, rushed from the card tables to vault into their saddles and take part in the engagement with the enemy. At times, too, some of them, from mere indolence, would not take the trouble of taking their places in their general's staff, unless a brush with the foe was expected. An amusing feat of idleness is mentioned in letters which gives a pretty good illustration of the military laxity of those times.

Marshal de Boufflers, whilst commanding the army in Flanders during the War of Succession, had an *aide-de-camp*, called the Chevalier de Caderousse, belonging to one of the noblest houses. The Chevalier's laziness was proverbial. One morning his orderly burst into his bedroom ejaculating, 'My lord, it is five o'clock, and the Marshal is on horseback already for the review!'

'What?' exclaimed the Chevalier. 'Already on horseback, and I am not by his side! Then I am not worthy to see the light of day; draw the curtains closer.'

And thereupon the epicurean Chevalier resumed his sound sleep.

LXIII

A FRUGAL DINNER

ROUSSEAU was more of a misanthropist than Molière's Alceste, and though the fact was well known, he was, nevertheless, as much sought after as Voltaire himself. Upon those who had read his works—and who had not read them?—he exercised strong fascination. For what mortal before him had ever so profoundly moved the hearts of men as he had, so powerfully aroused human passions, stirred up sympathy, and, at the same time, sapped the social edifice, shaken the political structure, and foreshadowed a new world? Making our most intimate fibres vibrate with emotion, he acted upon each man individually; and, making mankind as a whole conscious of its miseries and wants, he acted on the entire social organism. His picturesque descriptions and fervid style, his bold originality and prolific imagination, his flow of ideas, his pregnant thoughts, his prophetic visions and his ideal humanity, his conception of right and justice, his pathetic appeals and torrential eloquence, carried conviction to every breast. The germinal power of his works was at once felt; it charmed, captivated and conquered all minds; and within the life of one generation, modern education on the one hand, and modern government on the other, were based upon his conceptions, while an upheaval of social questions mainly

traceable to his teaching was rapidly developing. His sophistry might be glaring, his character despised, his conduct odious, his nature depraved, but still he was a force — irresistible as a volcano. And as a volcano generates poisonous vapour and shadow, burning stones and ashes, and overwhelms fields and cities, yet, meanwhile, illumines the night, pours out new formations, and raises mountains, so, too, Rousseau dissolved and destroyed, but he also laid the foundations of a new civilisation. And thus he was, if not courted, run after, if not loved, admired by all sorts of men and women—great or little, courtiers or commoners. He need never have had a meal at home had he accepted only the fifth part of the invitations he received morning, noon and night. But he avoided as much as he could the opportunities that daily occurred of offering himself as a curiosity; and he refused, often with a grunt, the hospitality he was entreated to accept.

There is a little story told about him — very insignificant, but very characteristic — that gives us a pretty good idea of his bluntness and irritability. He had repeatedly declined an invitation to dinner from a gentleman whom he knew but slightly, but whom he frequently met in his walks in the Luxembourg Gardens.

'Mr Rousseau,' the would-be host would say, 'I am something of a philosopher myself. I am not fond of company. I can bear only those with whom I can be on equal terms, whether socially or intellectually; and I value a man, not for his wealth or position, but for his disinterestedness and devotion to others. That is why, Mr Rousseau, I am proud of your acquaintance, and why I should consider it an honour to have you as a guest. We should be alone; the dinner would be as frugal as any philosopher could wish, and you would confer on me an ever-memorable act of courtesy.'

Again and again the same invitation had been made and declined. One day, however, the gentleman persist-

ing more than usual, Rousseau yielded, and said, 'Very well, sir, I will come, provided you will let me share pot-luck with you, and nothing but pot-luck.'

'And that is exactly what I was intending to do, sir; you would give me additional pleasure in taking me as I am.'

'What day shall we say, sir?'

'Whenever you like. We can dine at four.'

'Very well then, expect me to-morrow.'

And the next day Rousseau went.

'Delighted to see you so punctual, Mr Rousseau,' said the host, 'dinner is ready.'

The meal was served. Two fried herrings came on, and were soon disposed of. Then the host got up and put a plate of walnuts on the table.

'Here is our dessert,' said he; 'now we can talk.'

Rousseau was rather astonished. There had been no time to exchange two ideas—and the repast was over. He remained silent, with a frigid eye on the nuts, and a gathering frown on his brow.

'You see, Mr Rousseau,' said the host, when the walnuts were eaten, 'I make no stranger of you. The dinner here is always simple and frugal, and whenever you feel inclined to have it again, you have only to say so, and we shall have another dinner together.'

'Well, then, sir,' said Rousseau, 'if you give me *carte blanche*, I should not mind having another one at once, if you please.'

And as the host stared, wondering whether his guest was serious, Rousseau took his hat and departed more like a hungry man than a philosopher.

LXIV

THE SEA

THOSE who have beheld the sea, or only read the magnificent stanzas which Byron addresses to her at the end of 'Childe Harold,' can comprehend the natural terror she awakened in ancient ages. She then appeared a terrible abyss, or 'more invincible an obstacle than the highest mountains.' What, indeed, is more imposing and impressive than this element, this sleepless, restless immensity, now the picture of gentle life, now the scene of tumultuous and threatening destruction? And those waves of the sea that now caress or gnaw our shores have visited every clime, kissed or attacked the shores of all countries. But if she menaces and destroys, she also soothes and vivifies—nay, enriches every land that bathes its cliffs in her waters. The sea has become the benefactress of nations. She opens the shortest, the vastest, the most economical roads through the universe. 'She does not separate,' as the German Emperor justly observed, 'she connects nations.' The people who have entrusted themselves to her crested surface have built a power exceeding that of the most famous conquerors, and the maritime nations have not lived by her only, they have expanded their nationality, and found, outside

their own territories, possessions that will enable them to survive the exhaustion of their native soil. When England, France, Germany, shall have used their mineral wealth, they will, instead of decaying and dying, find new coal-fields and mineral resources in virgin lands. The sea will save them from extinction. She does more. She invigorates an old race. To those who conquer her she gives strength and health—nay, moral virtues—resignation, candour, mirth, devotion, energy and valour. The sailor's life is one of hourly peril and incomparable heroism, to which military life offers no parallel. The soldier is surrounded by incentives, all of them powerful. The eyes of ten thousand comrades, and a hundred chiefs, the excitement kindled by gunpowder, the enthusiasm aroused by the national song, the exhilaration caused by martial music, the beat of drums, the vibrating blast of trumpets, impel him to face the enemy with bravery. The sailor has none of these. He is almost alone, fronting a tempestuous assault of wild and unchained elements, and does his duty unseen. The soldier may once in his life storm a fortress; the sailor every minute of his existence rides in the face of death against a hurricane. He, a living atom, has to overcome the rage of a world, and he comes out victorious or dies! There is no retreat, no shelter for him; his enemy stays not, gives no quarter. The sea, however, has made him worthy of her; she has endowed him with a soul of steel. She has done still more. She has cured him of the petty selfishness that dishonours the dwellers of cities. She has raised his intelligence; for she has given him the faculty of observation and discovery, the power of reflection and foresight. Such is that sublime benefactress. We do not speak of the food she supplies—not the least of the blessings she so bountifully pours upon us.

She is the most inexhaustible source of solid riches, and at the same time the most poetical and inspiring sight we have; ever changeable, and yet ever the same.

A high stage of civilisation alone, however, enabled man to effect the conquest of the sea. And the dread of her entertained by ancient men is only too comprehensible. The Egyptians first, and the Persians after them, faced at last the perils of the main. The Greeks went further still; they manned their fleets with heroes, and made the sea a new political dominion. Yet, a voyage on the sea was a very rare performance. Apart from sailors and merchants, few men dared venture on the treacherous element, so awful and feared by all was the beautiful ocean. Even philosophers felt shy when beholding the broad expanse. They studied the sea, but did not trust her. One of them meditated on the daily problem offered to him for solution by her tides. 'What could cause them?' he asked himself for years, and being unable to answer the question, he flung himself into the deep.

A modern landsman—so great has been the progress of mankind—would have proved equal to the occasion, and preserved his precious life for the enlightenment of his benighted fellowmen. This was the case with Mr Prudhomme, a *bourgeois*, who, being a Parisian, shared with his townsmen the omniscience for which they are famous. He was no Newton—had never heard of Newton, you may be sure—and yet, the round little man with a round, moon face and round eyes, having made money in the hosiery trade, was not likely to be baffled, as philosophers of bygone days were, by simple natural puzzles. He took his wife to the seaside, and the amiable couple saw the ocean for the first time. After some ten days: 'Mr Prudhomme,' asked the lady, 'how is it the water comes up and goes down like this?'

'Why, my dear,' he replied, 'it is the tide.'

'The tide! is it? But what is the tide?'

'The tide, my dear, is a phenomenon—the rise and fall of the water, as you see.'

'Yes; but, Mr Prudhomme, what is the cause of this rise and fall?'

'Well,' replied the wise man, 'fishes want food twice a day just as we do. They have discovered that people who walk along the beach throw the crumbs of their buns into the water, and twice a day they come in shoals all along the coast to take their meals, and they are so very numerous that they make the water swell. When they have had their food they go away, and the water returns to its previous level.'

'I suppose the fishes go away to digest their meal?' said the lady.

'Ay, and they are fond of exercise, too,' he answered.

'But they never come back regularly at the same hour?'

'Because they cannot guess the hour of the clock exactly, and they make mistakes. They cannot help it. They are so foolish that they come at night when nobody is about,' Mr Prudhomme said.

'Then they get no food?'

'No, they go away, rather disappointed, I imagine, but they return early the next morning.'

'Last week,' said the lady who was hungering for knowlege, 'the tide was higher than now, how is that?'

'Nothing is simpler,' replied her well-informed husband, 'the fishes had not had sufficient sustenance the week before, so they came in larger numbers last week, and the water rose higher. This week, having had plenty, they are not so many, and the water does not rise so high.'

'How very numerous they must be, though,' said the lady.

'So numerous that on the seashore you can have twenty herrings for a franc,' he answered.

'Fancy!' rejoined Mrs Prudhomme.

'Another advantage of this arrangement, which proves that the universe has been created for the convenience of man,' Mr Prudhomme said, with profound solemnity, 'is that, as the fishes come along to be fed, they come along also to be caught.'

'What a beautiful contrivance!' exclaimed the lady.

'Ay, it is!' he answered, 'for if man feeds fishes, fishes feed man.'

'But,' said the lady, 'they ought to see in the long run it hardly pays them to come every day twice along the coast just to be caught in thousands for a few buns.'

'This shows how giddy fishes are, and how superior men are to herrings. They are intelligent enough to find food, but not intellectual enough to escape danger. 'Here,' added Mr Prudhomme, with due emphasis, 'here you see the power of the mind, and why man is the lord of creation.'

'Well, Mr Prudhomme,' said the lady, much impressed, 'it is worth coming to Dieppe if only to see and learn as much.'

'The more we study Nature,' the eloquent Mr Prudhomme went on, with a gravity which Toole would have envied, 'the more we discover in her. That makes the useless pastime called Science at least an interesting recreation.

'Very! I should say,' his wife said, with conviction.

In antiquity there were no such thinkers as Mr Prudhomme, and philosophers did not presume to fathom the mysteries of the ocean. They saw the ocean with admiration and awe, and if they ventured at all to cross a sea it was with strong apprehensions. Aristippus was once crossing from Cnidos to Crete when the vessel was assailed by a storm, and the few passengers showed unmistakable signs of terror. The master of the ship, accustomed to the perils of his calling, said to the sage, 'You philosophers, you are all cowards on the sea! Look at me, I am not afraid of death.'

'My friend,' answered the philosopher, 'remember we have not the same kind of soul at stake.'

But there was one philosopher at least, who was true to his fearless doctrines. Crossing the Ægean Sea in a storm, Pyrrho, observing, in the midst of the excitement and cries of the terrified passengers, a pig that was quietly feeding, could not help exclaiming, 'Such ought to be the impassibility of the sage!'

LXV

SHERIDAN'S RIVAL

PIRON, the French Sheridan, as regards wit, if not eloquence and dramatic power, made many enemies by his sarcastic cuts and shrewd criticism. His first victory was gained over the Beaune people, who had attacked his fellow townsmen and himself. Scouring the fields round Beaune, he rooted out and cut down as many thistles as he could find — saying to the astonished passers-by, 'Being at war with the Beaunois, I am destroying their food supplies!'

On another occasion, in the Beaune theatre, someone having shouted, 'Silence, over there! people can hear nothing!'

'It is not for want of ears!' cried Piron. A piece of sarcasm which nearly cost him his life.

He so offended the members of the French Academy that, for a long time, they would not hear of his admission among the Forty, although he was head and shoulders above a score of them. For, being asked what sort of a speech he would make if he were elected, and what sort of reply to it he expected from the learned body,—

'My speech,' he said, 'will be merely this: "Gentlemen, many thanks!" And they will answer, "Sir, do not mention it, it is not worth talking about."'

Of a very witty person, the French say very often, 'He has wit enough for four people.'

Once, passing before the Academy Palace, Piron said to some friends, 'There are forty fellows here, who have wit enough for four.'

The most offensive epigram, however, he wrote against the Immortals was the epitaph he composed for himself, by which he is best known outside France:—

> Here lies Piron, who was nothing,
> Not e'en an academic thing.*

It seemed outrageous that he should have dared write this quip, when the sacred portals had actually been opened to him; but as the King had vetoed his admission, he was not sorry to show how cheap he held both his election and his exclusion, for the epitaph is just as cutting an epigram against the Court as against the Academy itself.

There are several anecdotes about him which qualify him to stand amongst the most famous wits on record.

One of the qualities of Piron's wit was its soundness. It might be unkind, but it was truthful.

A poet was reading once a tragedy, in which could be recognised verses boldly borrowed from well-known

* Ci-gît Piron, qui ne fut rien,
Pas même académicien.

authors, and, very often during the reading, Piron raised his hat and bowed.

'What is the reason,' asked the reader, 'of your singular behaviour in raising your hat so often?'

'My behaviour is not singular,' replied Piron; 'it is a custom of mine to bow whenever I meet any of my old acquaintances.'

On one occasion he had predicted the failure of a certain play to its author, and the event showed the shrewdness of his prophecy.

'Well,' said the poet to him after the performance, 'there was no enthusiasm, it is true; but I may console myself with the reflection that the spectators did not hiss my play.'

'It would not have been easy for them to gape and hiss at the same time,' replied Piron.

But the following is less generally known. He had made himself exceedingly obnoxious to Rousseau by his offensive remarks about the philosopher and his works. As Rousseau was as sensitive as a bride, as vain as a peacock, as crabby as two sticks, as irascible as a tiger, as irrepressible as gunpowder, he literally boiled with rage when he heard of the unsparing strictures, smart taunts, merry lampoons and playful gibes with which Piron had been amusing the literary circles of Paris upon the appearance of the *New Heloise*. Incapable of self-control, Rousseau, one morning that he had heard a fresh freak of waggery at his expense, rushed to Piron's lodgings, determined to outpour the vials of his wrath and revile his intimate enemy by a torrent of invectives. He ascended, two steps at a time, the four storeys which led to Piron's rooms, his anger increasing in the same proportion as his respiration grew feebler, and he arrived on the right landing, breathless and furious in an equal degree. He knocked and rang. He knocked and rang louder and louder. Nobody answered. No one was at home. Doubly enraged at having come

so far, and having gone up so quickly for nothing, Jean Jacques, who, fortunately, had a bit of chalk in his pocket, partly relieved his feelings by writing in large letters on the door the word 'Scoundrel,' and slowly departed. In the afternoon he chanced to meet Piron in the Luxembourg Gardens, and, happy to have this unexpected opportunity to give vent to his passion, he hastened to his critic, and ejaculated in a fierce voice, 'Sir, I paid you a visit this morning.'

'I know,' replied Piron, 'I saw your name on the door,' and he passed on, raising his hat.

Rousseau, taken aback by this additional wrong, stood motionless and speechless, assailed by a multitude of reflections upon the villainy of civilised mankind.

LXVI

SHERIDAN AT THE THEATRE AND AT HOME

So many tales are laid to the credit of Sheridan, and are so well known, too, that one hesitates to repeat them. In the number, there are two which have perhaps not had the same currency as the others, although they furnish an excellent illustration of the ready wit of the prince of jesters.

During a representation at Drury Lane, at which he was present, one of the spectators in the front row, stirred by the impressive scene before him, suddenly rose from his seat and stood upright staring at the stage —obviously under the spell of uncontrollable emotion. Many of the audience behind him, unable to see through his mortal coil what was going on, shouted, 'Sit down! Take your seat! Down with him! Turn him out!'

But the man, heedless of the storm he had raised, remained standing and stared at the actors. The whole pit soon joined in the chorus of angry calls, and added to it variations of hisses, groans and hooting, until the din at last awoke the man to a sense of the situation. He turned round, and realised that he was the object of popular anger. There could be no mistake. He saw fiery eyes looking at him, fists pointed at him, heard two hundred throats hoarsely bawling, 'Sit down, you lout! Sit down!' The man's former unconsciousness now turned into obstinacy, and he stolidly remained upright, looking defiantly at the crowd. This had the natural effect—the racket went crescendo, and the vociferations redoubled,

Sheridan, who was in a box, now rose up from his armchair, and, leaning forward over the edge of the balcony, extended his arm towards the pit—a gesture which seemed to request attention. Having thereby secured comparative silence, he said, in a calm and clear voice to the audience, 'Gentlemen, do you not see that he is a tailor resting himself?'

The whole house broke out in convulsive laughter, and the man sunk into his seat—making himself as small as he could.

The other story is of a different kind.

Sheridan often drifted into impecunious circumstances, and was now and then sued by pressing creditors. A creditor of his, who had shrunk from taking legal proceedings, had called upon him several times to recover his bill, and Sheridan had put him off repeatedly under one pretext or another. The creditor, after long delays, made a final call upon his debtor and pressed him very hard to pay. Sheridan, who wanted more time, but saw by the tone and persistence of the man that immediate proceedings would ensue if he did not get the better of him by some stroke of genius, remembered how well Don Juan had got on with

Monsieur Dimanche on a similiar occasion, and he thought he might as well try to deal the enemy a moral blow that might put him out of countenance.

'Mr Jones,' said he, 'you are unnecessarily pressing; you can easily wait!'

'But, sir,' energetically replied the other, 'I cannot wait!'

'Cannot wait! Why so?'

'Because I want the money, sir.'

'Want the money! And what for?

'Why, sir, for my wholesale merchant.'

'Do you owe him anything, then?'

'Yes, sir, I do.'

'Why in the world don't you pay him, then?'

'Because I have got no money.'

'You have got no money? Why, then, you are no better than I am, and I do not see why, being a penniless man yourself, you should give yourself airs and try to lord it over me. Why, man, we are in the same boat! Don't you see?'

The man was so struck and dumbfounded by this unexpected piece of unanswerable logic, that he went away peaceably and waited.

LXVII

HENRY IV.'S DELIVERER

HENRY OF NAVARRE, so sympathetic as a prince to the lover of romance, is still more sympathetic to the student of history under his kingly title of Henry IV. It may be safely predicted that he will always be honoured by the French—even when monarchy has completely ceased to be a possible mode of government in their country—because of the seventy-three kings who reigned over France, he was, deservedly, the most popular sovereign. Despite the revolutions which have repeatedly upset royalty, Henri Quatre has, ever since his murder, been respected by all parties for his moral courage, physical bravery, provident foresight, political liberality, breadth of mind, far-reaching national policy and genuine kindness towards his humblest subjects. Had he not said, 'I wish each man to have a stewed fowl' (*poule au pot*) 'every Sunday,' and acted on that principle? Had he not ended civil war? Had he not won his kingdom at the point of the sword? brought in religious freedom? granted their rights to the

Protestants? Had he not made just laws, restored prosperity, made France powerful? Had he not surrounded himself, in order to govern justly and paternally, with the ablest and most virtuous men he could find? Had he not been, despite his *bonhomie*, 'every inch a king?' And so the genial prince, with the fatherly smile, has, without depreciation, stood high in the judgment of historians, just as his bronze statue has, without insult or injury—except during the Terror madness—stood as a monument of his own greatness, and a memorial of popular veneration.

But Henri Quatre, as everyone knows, was no less humorous than brave, and no less witty than practical. As he was passing one day through a small town, he alighted from his coach for the purpose of taking some refreshment, and as his coming was expected, the Corporation begged the privilege of reading an address to their King. The prayer being granted, they came, and the Mayor, after unfolding a formidable roll of parchment, began to read a lengthy address. It began by the statement that of the thirteen reasons why guns had not been fired as a sign of rejoicing on the occasion of the King's presence, the first was that the town had no cannon.

'If it be so,' interrupted Henry IV., 'you may dispense with the enumeration of the other twelve reasons. Pray pass on.'

The Mayor, skipping over a long passage, turned a leaf over, and went on to mention the numerous causes of the love of the French to their Sovereign. The King, who never liked waste of time, became rather restless, but he forbore showing it too much, lest he should damp the warmth of his subjects' loyalty by a discourteous display of impatience. Long pages had still to be read, and he did not know how to cut the address short, when an humble creature came to his assistance. A donkey, close by, began a tre-

mendous flourish of braying, and roared by himself louder than a whole menagerie of unchained lions. The King then, in the midst of the deafening hulla-bulloo, found his opportunity.

'Dear Mr Mayor,' said he, with the most winning smile, 'one at a time is enough; and as we cannot hear both voices at once, give your address to our Chamberlain, and accept our thanks for your expressions of loyalty.'

And bowing amiably to the Corporation, he turned away quickly, just as the donkey was roaring his last strain.

We may take it for granted that the dutiful animal was voted a bushel of barley-meal by the King for his clever interference, and a bundle of cudgels by the townsmen for his untimely impertinence.

LXVIII

AMENITIES AND 'ROARS OF LAUGHTER'

It is notorious that the awe attached to justice, the silence enforced in a court, the gravity of the Bench, the value of judicial debate, the seriousness of involved interests, the weight and expectancy of a vital decision, the stress of attention, all contribute to make a tribunal—a church excepted—the most solemn place in the world. The atmosphere breathed by the audience is one that excludes all thoughts of levity. All those present are constrained to observe decorum, and human nature is generally under the most serious restraint. Under such circumstances, a lively incident, the mildest appearance of merriment on the part of the judges, advocates or witnesses offer the opportunity for a strong reaction, which breaks out in 'roars of laughter,' the louder in proportion as the strain of demureness was more severe.

The story of Henry IV.'s donkey brought back to our mind a similar occurrence in one of our courts

of justice, which had a sequel just as witty as it was novel. A case, which was more remarkable for its tedious details than its importance, was being tried before Lord Avanmore. It had taken two or three sittings, and was at last on the point of terminating. The Counsel, John Philpotts Curran, was pleading when the uproarious bray of a donkey was heard from outside. Lord Avanmore, who was bored by the case and whose ready wit got the better of his gravity, said very dryly: 'One at a time, Mr Counsel, please. I cannot hear a word.' The public, predisposed to mirth by the bray, burst out in 'convulsive laughter.' Counsel, of course, had bowed to his Lordship and stopped. When the donkey's thunder was over, he went on with his argument and soon wound up. It was now Lord Avanmore's turn to speak, and sum up the case. He had just begun to lay down the chief points, when the donkey broke out afresh, in louder and more sustained notes than before. Counsel rose and, bowing to his lordship, said very courteously, 'My Lord, I beg your pardon, but don't you think there is a very extraordinary echo in the Court?' And he sat down amidst the three-times-three peals of laughter of the audience, which His Lordship recalled to a sense of decency. This display of wit on both sides compensated the public for the very innocuous jokes which the whole Bench and the Bar had been perpetrating for years on Her Majesty's subjects.

LXIX

WHOSE ARE THE STAKES

EVERY nation has had, and has, favourite pastimes and pleasures, more or less characteristic. The Hindus invented chess, and for ages have considered the game as a lofty kind of relaxation. This game is in harmony with their quiet and meditative nature. The Greeks had their athletics, which were in keeping with their activity and love of beauty. Gladiatorial games were the pastime of the Romans. They accustomed the conquering nation to bear emotion and hardship without flinching. In the feudal times knights had their tournaments, which were a picture of war and a school of gallantry. Spain has her bull-fights — a survival of the Roman amphitheatre and Moorish customs— which reveal the barbarity of semi-civilisation. The rest of modern Europe has horse-races, balls, masquerades, fireworks, and countless sports and games. The complexity of social progress seems to carry with it variety of taste. All physical games in our time are not only laudable in their object, but admirable in their results. Gymnastics, regattas, cricket, lawn-tennis, football, golf, to speak of the chief pastimes that are

most familiar to us, denote an advanced stage of civilised life. A deep feeling of humanity has caused the disappearance of brutal games, and the advent of gentle ones. Bull and bear-baiting, cock-fighting, boxing, have gradually made room for more refined sports. Indoor pastimes are also numerous and delightful. What is more fascinating than billiards? What can be more admirable, as a game, than chess or draughts, which exercise the mental faculties and are exempt from the debasing effects of gambling? Card games cannot be so famed and so reputable, because chance is one of their elements, because — with the exception of whist—they demand no mental exertion, and because stakes are too often thought necessary to make them of lasting interest. They have, however, an advantage: they provide pleasant rest for serious minds, and inoffensive employment for frivolous people. They occupy without the labour of thinking. They bring into contact persons who would never otherwise meet—a great benefit. On the other hand, card games may be the source of much evil. They offer the temptation of gambling — of all human vices perhaps the most baneful and terrible. For gambling brings in its train, said a moralist, unmitigated corruption; it brutalises the mind, extinguishes love of work and study, and delivers a man up to an exclusive and fatal infatuation, which has no counterpoise and knows no moderation. It is at once a reckless and domineering passion. If gambling be not in all cases an indomitable craving, it is generally the amusement of limited and idle minds, and debars these from the possibility of improvement. One of its evil consequences, in many cases, is complete demoralisation; it brings about the ruin of some, and makes the fortune of others; it often leads to fraud and cheating; it can give you partners but no friends, because 'gamblers end in hating those who win their money.' To a certainty it must lead

weak men to disgrace, shame or dishonour. Few passions, therefore, are more degrading.

True it is that in good society card-playing is a rest, a break in the pleasure of conversation, and is seldom, if ever, shabby, passionate and rapacious. In such a case it is an innocent enjoyment enough; but beyond refined circles it is as dangerous as any human failing can be. We ought not, therefore, to accept as a plea in its favour the argument put forward by inveterate players. 'Card-playing having originated at Court and in the highest society,' they say, 'is a noble habit and a harmless pastime rather than a reprehensible custom.' This argument is not applicable universally — far from it; it only applies to a very narrow circle in all countries. Those who argue thus lose sight of the moral principle which should direct our actions, and they forget the effects of card-playing and gambling over people whose moral sense is weak or non-existent. Generally speaking, then, cards are a danger. It cannot be denied that gamblers will find innumerable opportunities for staking large sums besides card-playing, but the latter presents an hourly, daily, constant temptation, and is probably the most enduring source of fatal consequences.

That high-minded and noble people can indulge in card-playing without the least danger to their sense of honour has been daily exemplified in every Court, as well as in the highest society in Europe, for ages. The following record is an instance of this truism.

Cards were played almost every evening at Versailles, and Louis XIV. would frequently sit down to a game of Piquet. Once there was great uncertainty in the reckoning, and the courtiers—after asserting what they believed to be true—respectfully kept silent when they saw the King maintain that he was right in asserting the reverse.

In came the Duke of Grammont. He approached

the tables, and judged the situation at a glance. The King, seeing him, said, 'Duke, you shall be referee.'

'Your Majesty,' said the Duke, quickly, 'seems to be in the wrong.'

'How so?' said the King. 'You do not know yet what is the matter.'

'Your Majesty,' answered the Duke, 'can hardly be right, for I observe that all these gentlemen are silent. If the case were doubtful, in the least degree, these gentlemen would have hastened to concede the point without a demur, but their silence plainly shows that they dare not prove the mistake of Your Majesty.'

'You are right,' said the King. 'Gentlemen, the game is yours.'

'Fair play is a jewel.' We need not be afraid of any game when kept within the bounds of moderation. The antiquity of this saw does not rob it of its wisdom.

LXX

HAT IN HAND

ONE of the characteristics of the literary men of the eighteenth century in France was scepticism, often verging on irreligion—a defect due partly to the superstitious excesses and domineering means of repression of the Catholic clergy, and partly to the bold denunciation of the worldliness of Roman churchmen. This superstition, repression and worldliness aroused against the 'clerics' a relentless hostility, which was soon extended to the creed they professed, and unbelief was the consequence from Fréret's time (about 1720) until the Revolution. The Roman Church, however, supported as it was by the temporal power of the King's government, abated none of its pretensions to authority, and considered the attacks of the 'libertines,' as the free-thinkers were then called, as aspersions alike unjust and audacious,

which it was right not only to deny, but to counteract by increased displays of its divine mission. Stately processions—some of which are still taking place in remote religious French towns—went through the streets of Paris on the great feasts, such as the Ascension Day, the day of the Assumption of the Virgin, the day of the Holy Spirit, and so forth. As the bulk of the population, and householders generally, adorned the front of their dwellings with green palms and branches of foliage, white or rich draperies and long festoons of flowers; as they built every fifty yards triumphal arches bedecked with lace, flags and figures, and at every street corner a *reposoire* of great beauty where candles and incense were burning, and as besides all this they strewed the pavement with cartfuls of fresh flowers, it all seemed the spontaneous outburst of universal religious feeling. And it appeared to be the more so, because thousands of white-robed and wreathed children took part in the function, scattered rose leaves and sang canticles to the accompaniment of musical bands and choristers. At intervals the procession was made more beautiful by large banners of embroidered gold in honour of some saints, and more imposing still by gilded arks containing holy relics. When the 'Host' passed, the crowd reverently knelt down, and received the blessing of the Bishop. By such ceremonials did the Church overawe the multitude and maintain its sway. And those persons who would have ventured to show any disrespect on these occasions knew they would have done so at their peril. The fate of La Barre and d'Etallonde, whose sentence of death, nobleman though they were, was still fresh in the memory of everyone, was not likely to be forgotten.

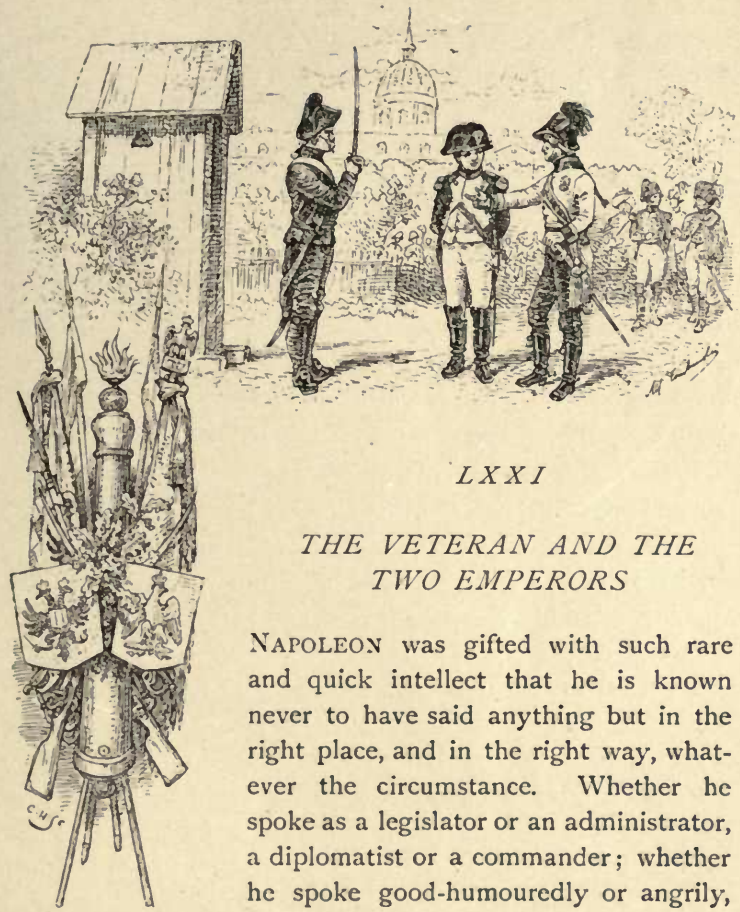
Piron was once taking a walk with a friend of his, when suddenly, at the corner of a street, he came upon a procession. He stopped, took his hat off, and stood still until the long and pompous march-past was over. His friend, who had spontaneously acted in the same

manner, could not contain himself with astonishment, and he naturally expressed his surprise.

'What,' he exclaimed, 'you, Piron, a sceptic! This indeed confounds me! Hat respectfully in hand before the holy Host!'

'Yes, we are not on speaking terms, but we bow to each other,' replied the irreverent philosopher.

A typical specimen of the infidels in those times.



LXXI

THE VETERAN AND THE TWO EMPERORS

NAPOLEON was gifted with such rare and quick intellect that he is known never to have said anything but in the right place, and in the right way, whatever the circumstance. Whether he spoke as a legislator or an administrator, a diplomatist or a commander; whether he spoke good-humouredly or angrily, as a host, a guest, a friend or an enemy; whether he put a question or shot a repartee, what he said was to the point, as neat and clear as it was clever and fitting.

After Napoleon's marriage with the Archduchess of Austria, the Emperor Francis paid a visit to his daughter. This prince must have been of a very forgiving and magnanimous disposition thus to come to Paris, and seemingly, overlook all the humiliations which his empire had suffered at the hands of the mighty ruler who reigned over France, and had imposed four successive disastrous peace treaties upon him, each of which had

decreased his power and curtailed his dominions. For Napoleon deprived Austria of her Italian possessions and Belgium after his victory of Rivoli, of power in the Netherlands after Marengo, of Venice and half Germany after Austerlitz, of more territory and prestige after Wagram. But what must have been more galling still, the victor, only fifteen years before a mere artillery officer, and now the Dictator of Europe, had demanded and obtained the hand of the daughter of the Cæsars, as she was called, and the Emperor of Austria, the representative of ancient monarchies and divine right had become father-in-law to Napoleon, the offspring of the Republic and representative of Revolution and popular sovereignty. Francis seems to have become reconciled to his fate, and, to do Napoleon justice, the French Emperor, by his amiable behaviour, gracious deference and uniform suavity after his victory of Wagram, had made apparent amity a matter of easy realisation. To the fascination his marvellous intellect exercised, he added that sweetness and charm of manner which made him irresistible, and Francis, like the Czar Alexander before him, forgot the *parvenu* in Napoleon and saw in him only the sovereign of supreme genius—an equal in rank, a superior by the will of fickle Fortune.

During this visit Francis saw everything that was remarkable in Paris, and, amongst other public establishments, he went over the Hôtel des Invalides—the home of old warriors. On this occasion, he was accompanied by Napoleon himself, who took delight in showing to his father-in-law those old soldiers whom he had so often led to victory, and who, just as much as Fortune and Genius, had helped him to don the imperial crown.

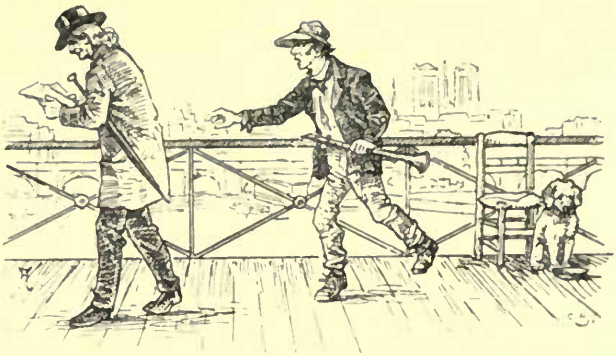
As the two sovereigns were passing, arm-in-arm, by a sentry—a tall sunburnt veteran who presented a military salute—the Austrian Emperor observed the mark of a broad sword cut running across the face of the soldier.

He stopped Napoleon, and, pointing to the deep scar, said, 'What do you think, brother, of the soldiers who inflict such wounds as these?'

'They are dead,' cried the soldier himself, to the relief of Napoleon, who, as a host, might have been puzzled by the question.

'You see, brother,' he said, with a smile, 'my guards may be trusted. I always rely on them'

'Ay, and well may you, brother,' replied Francis, 'for in peace as in war they give Your Majesty the victory.'



LXXII

HAVE PITY UPON THE POOR BLIND

BETWEEN the Louvre and the French Academy there is a bridge in Paris called 'Pont des Arts.' Standing across the Seine, just below the junction of the two arms of the river, it is nearly as long as the Pont Neuf, and its structure being loftier than that of other bridges, it commands a magnificent view, one certainly of the most striking in the world for variety and beauty. If the beholder enters the bridge from the Louvre side, he sees in front of him the Mazarin Palace, with the Tower of St Germain des Prés above—and to the right, in a line as far as the eye reaches, a sweep of palatial buildings facing stately quays, while to his left he sees the southern arm of the river, with its double row of houses and the Mint Palace. From the middle of the bridge, looking eastward, he views the Pont Neuf from end to end, and Henry IV.'s equestrian statue, below which projects the grassy and leafy promontory of the City, while above the island houses, he views the towers of Notre Dame and its lace-like spire, the St Chapelle and St Séverin and their elegant, slender steeples. Turning his gaze to the left, without even moving his head, the beholder views the perspective of massive round and pointed towers of the Palace of Justice, overlooking the north river

quays, together with the north branch of the Seine and its numerous bridges. Bending his eye slightly more to the left, he sees the Hôtel de Ville—one of the most beautiful palaces in Paris, with its bold roofs enriched by gilded statues—then, slowly following the course of the river, the gothic St James Tower, the whole sweep of theatres, columns, fountains, until he beholds the memorable St Germain l'Auxerrois, the tocsin of which sounded the signal for the massacre of the Protestants in 1572, on the ghastly night of St Bartholomew. From that point he views the whole range of the Louvre—a front of eight hundred paces of unrivalled statuary and architecture—and to the west of it the grand and leafy Tuileries Gardens, and beyond them, high up, above the mile of green avenues of the Champs Elysées, the gigantic Arch of Triumph ending the horizon. Turning round now to face due west, the eye follows the onward course of the Seine, and can embrace a whole perspective of bridges, each of which is adorned with colossal figures, and to their left the *giorno* Eiffel Tower soaring into the blue sky—the river on both sides, in its entire run from east to west, being beautified by miles of spacious quays planted with luxuriant trees. When it is remembered that every monument, or bridge, or spot the onlooker can see within a few minutes, is associated with historical events of deep interest and of all sorts, during a course of twenty centuries, one may well doubt whether a more engrossing spectacle can be found anywhere: so that the Pont des Arts is a favoured spot in Paris beyond any.

This bridge is reached at both ends by a few stone steps, and is in consequence unavailable for horse and carriage traffic. It was for that reason, up to a few years ago, a favourite resort for the mendicant tribes of the capital. From early morning till late at night there were, along both parapets, beggars of every description. The halt, the maimed, the blind—cripples of all kinds—took

their station there, and appealed, in plaintive or roaring tones, to the pity of the quiet passers-by.

An Academician, who daily crossed the bridge, was in the habit of throwing a small silver coin into the saucer which a dog, standing on its hind legs, held in its jaws, and whose master shouted in a stentorian voice, 'Have pity upon the poor blind, ladies and gentlemen! Have pity upon the poor blind!'

On one occasion the learned man, probably absorbed by the fine lecture he was soon to deliver before the Academical gathering, was deaf to the usual call, and passed by without giving his customary trifle. Arrived at the end of the bridge, he felt someone touching him on the shoulder, and, turning round, he saw, to his utmost surprise, the poor man, who, touching his cap, said to him, "Beg your pardon, sir, but you have forgotten me this morning.'

'Forgotten you! How do you know? Have you seen me, then? Are you not blind?'

'Blind? Not I, sir; it is my poor dog that's blind.'

The Academician raised his astonished eyebrows to the brim of his hat, but in admiration of the man's daring and pity for the dog's misfortune, he doubled his donation. He had seen men keeping dogs, and blind men led by dogs, but never, until then, had he seen a dog keeping a man, nor a man leading a blind dog.

LXXIII

THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

THE clergy in France, during the eighteenth century, was composed of two very different sets of men. One set was made up of the small clergy, who came in contact with the people, and were admirable in every way; alike pious and worthy, bearing their poverty with manly patience, and showing by example every kind of virtue. They were loved by all—even Free-thinkers respected them as untainted, excellent citizens. The other set was the high clergy—composed of cardinals, prelates, and court churchmen—who were as different as it is possible to imagine. Worldliness was the one engrossing element which regulated their conduct. They were separated from the low clergy by a strong line—duty—love of duty on the one side, disregard of duty on

the other. Whilst the low clergy had doled out to them the poorest pittance that could keep body and soul together, the Church revenue, which was enormous, was distributed among the high dignitaries, and devoted to luxury. They lived the lives of princes. They had lands, palaces, gilt coaches, stables, hunting establishments, and a numerous retinue in rich liveries. A bishop, like Royalty, had no less than eight horses to his travelling chariot. He would think no more of having his servants or the peasantry cudgelled, than a gamekeeper his dogs. Prelates were consummate courtiers, and to lead a Court life was their ambition and practice. Exceptions there were, certainly, but these were few and far between. Under such circumstances the administration and work of a diocese was carried on by subordinates, archdeacons, archpriests, grand vicars, canons, chaplains, and secretaries. These composed his lordship's sermons, pastoral letters, homilies, and the titled prelate had only to append his signature to Church documents, often without troubling himself overmuch about their contents.

Piron was desirous of marrying a cousin of his, and, as a license was necessary, he paid a visit to the Bishop of Tours to obtain it. The prelate, who did not like consanguineous marriages, and had had his views on the subject published throughout the diocese, said to the bold petitioner, 'Mr Piron, I am not a little surprised at your request; have you not read my pastoral letter?'

'No, my lord; have you?'

The dignitary of the Church burst out laughing, and granted him his license.

LXXIV

HARD WORK ON BOARD SHIP

THOSE travellers who have visited Italy very justly praise the civility of the lower classes—artisans and peasants alike are courteous in manner and speech beyond all expectation, especially to strangers. They differ from the educated class only in elegance and grammar. The antiquity of Italian urbanity dates from ancient times, for civilisation in Italy never retrograded into barbarism as it did in the rest of Europe during the Middle Ages, and its roots had time to spread throughout the whole community. Polish is not a mere veneer, it is ingrained in the race. A stranger is also struck by another characteristic of theirs, and that is—liveliness of imagination. Taking a bird's eye view of Christendom, we find no country—except Ireland—where the same qualities can be found in the same degree. There, also, the humbler classes exhibit mental vivacity and attractive manners. No one returns from Erin without pleasurable impressions about the natural amiability, charming simplicity, ready wit, and genuine politeness of the Irish peasantry. Besides all these qualities, which reveal the kindliness of their hearts, the Irish evince a taste for music and poetry which is rare outside Germany. It is said they are fond of praise—

but we should like to know what people are indifferent to that? If they be, however, they are generally simple-minded and free from conceit.

On board one of our men-of-war, an officer took a kindly interest in some of the oldest sailors who came under his command. For a few days in succession it seemed to him that one of his favourites, who happened to be an Irishman, looked melancholy and absent, and showed none of that sprightly readiness to do his duty which made him a model Jack-Tar.

The officer said to him one morning, 'Tom, you are ill, you don't seem the thing, you had better see the doctor.'

'Oh, thank you, your honour, it is all over now, and I feel better already.'

'What has been the matter with you?'

'Oh, your honour, I have been rather hard worked for a fortnight, that is all.'

'Hard worked? Why! I thought you were taking it pretty easy.'

'Oh, your honour, I don't mean manual work but head work. My mind was in trouble, sir.'

'Have you had bad news from home, then?'

'No, your honour, and if I had I should have got over it; but head work is different, and when a man is not used to it it pulls him down somewhat.'

'But what work have you had? I cannot make it out.

'Why, sir, I am afraid you will laugh at me if I tell your honour.'

'Not at all, man, not at all, I feel interested What have you had to engross your mind?'

'Well, your honour, I have been composing.'

'Composing? Composing what?'

'I have been a-doing of poetry, your honour, and that is no small work for a sailor.'

'Poetry! you don't mean that, do you?'

'Begging your honour's pardon, I do '

'You mean that you have made some verses, Tom?'

'I have, your honour, and this morning I hit them off quite suddenly, though for more than a fortnight I could make nothing of the thing though I tried day and night.'

'But what is the piece?'

'Oh, your honour, I dare not repeat it.'

'Why not?'

'Why, your honour, my mates would poke fun at me, perhaps.'

'But I won't say a word about it.'

'Oh, if your honour promises that, then, I do not mind.'

'Well, what is it?'

'It is my epitaph for my tombstone, and when I am dead and gone they will carve it over my grave.'

'Your epitaph? Out with it, man.'

'Well then, your honour, here it is:—

'Here I lies,
Bless my eyes!'

LXXV

ANCIENT BARBERS

BARBERS in antiquity were just as talkative as their fashionable descendants, the hairdressers and *professeurs de coiffure* of the present day, probably more so. They were the gossip-mongers-in-chief, almost necessarily, for, in the absence of papers, every bit of news usually passed through the public bath or the barber's shop—the two sociable places of resort for men about town. Every customer was sure to ask the barber, '*Quid novi?*' —what's the news?—the moment he entered the shop, and the barber at once launched *in medias res*, telling what he knew about Domina Julia and the Court, the gladiatorial world, the late conspiracy, the chariot race, the young consul, the new tragedy, or the last epigram.

And the customer, in his turn, whilst he had his hair, his beard, his nails attended to, would tell the barber the scraps of news that he himself had heard, so that the barber was at once the general recipient and the general distributor of all news.

When the Roman Empire disappeared, the public bath vanished—only to be revived by the Arabs of Spain centuries later; but the barber's shop survived the crash, and it remained more or less the news agency. In the Middle Ages it certainly was as much so as it had been in Rome. With the news of the day, satire also came out of that gossip centre. For a long time after Alexander VI.—a Borgia—a satire found a safer channel than the barber's shop—safer, because it could not be traced to its author. Upon two mutilated statues, epigrams were written in pencil in the night-time by the wits of the town, read in the morning with eagerness by loungers, and spread during the day to the great delight of idlers. One statue—that of a gladiator, as the reader may recollect—was called *Paschino*, in remembrance of a tailor of that name, famous for his sallies; the other —that of Mars—was called *Marforio* because it had been found in the Forum. These were the two marbles that were early every morning surrounded by a crowd curious to see the fresh cuts scribbled by the political and social critics of the hour. The keenest were to be found on *Paschino*, and to those, answers were to be read next day on *Marforio*—but both sets were popularly called *Pasquinades*, after the name of *Paschino*, usually the smartest of the two.

The severest epigrams—shot at the Popes Alexander Borgia, Leo X., Clement VII., Paul III., and at Lucretia Borgia—were such that, had the authors been discovered, their wit would have cost them their lives. One was:

'Alexander sells the keys of heaven, the altar, and God Himself; as he bought them, he has a right to sell them.'

Another about Leo X., was not less offensive:

'You ask why Leo, in his last moments, has not taken the Sacrament; he had sold it.'

A third referred to Clement VII.:

'Dr Curtius has killed Clement (by his remedies), he should be paid as a man who has saved the State.'

Another upon Paul III.:

'Much was given to poets formally to sing great deeds; how much gold, Paul, wilt thou give me to be silent about thee?'

And by the side of such epigrams, many others, that could neither be forgiven nor forgotton, dealt heavy blows at cardinals and other personages. Under such circumstances, barbers, no longer gossips-in-chief, lost their hold upon the public ear. But in antiquity they had been a power—a power dreaded by many, for they could make and unmake reputations. One man, however, was not afraid of their tongues, and that was Polyxenes.

Polyxenes once entered the establishment of a Syracuse barber, and, almost before he had been bowed to a seat, he had heard all about the weather, the wind, the rain of Sicily, the late rumblings of Mount Etna, the genius of Dionysius, the growing prosperity, the launch of the war trireme, the new law against public meetings, and the long cloak coming into fashion. After this exuberant exordium, the barber, almost breathless, put his usual question, 'And, my lord, how shall I trim your beard?'

'Without saying a word,' replied Polyxenes, to the unrepressed surprise of the operator.

No wonder Polyxenes acquired the reputation of being a dry, churlish, unpleasant poet.

LXXVI

ROYAL POLITENESS

WHAT has been said about George IV. could also be said about Louis XIV. He, too, was undoubtedly the first gentleman of his kingdom. This is not always borne out by St Simon, whose *Mémoires* contain facts which do not always show the Prince under a favourable light; but if the King was at times hard-hearted and regardless of his subjects' feelings in political and religious matters, he uniformly remained faultless as regards manners, etiquette, refinement and dignity. He once threw his cane out of the window, lest, giving way to his anger, he should break it on the back of Lauzun, who had failed in respect to him.

One day the King, followed by a crowd of courtiers, was taking a constitutional walk in the splendid Versailles Park, when a gardener, who was attending to a flower bed, stopped his work and made a profound obeisance to his master. Louis XIV. returned the salute by raising his hat. This act of kind condescension astonished in no small degree the grandees of his Court. So much so, that the Duke de St Aignan, who enjoyed the privilege of comparative free-speech with the monarch, could not help expressing his surprise.

'Sire,' said he, 'we all of us feel the deepest astonishment that so great a King as your Majesty should deign to return the bow of a labourer.'

'Monsieur le Duc,' replied the Prince, 'I should not like anyone to have occasion to say that a poor gardener was more polite than the King of France.'

That the courtiers at once nodded their admiration in dumb show goes without saying.

It is related that Sir William Gough showed the same kindliness under similar circumstances. The Governor of Williamsburg was once walking with a friend, when he returned the salute of a negro who bowed to him.

'Do you deign,' said his friend to him, 'to take notice of a slave?'

'Certainly,' replied Sir William, 'for I cannot allow a slave to excel me in good manners.'

On the same subject there is another story well worth repeating. In a very hard fight in Flanders, Marshal Maurice de Saxe, the victor of Fontenoy, had his troops severely tried by the artillery fire of the enemy. The shells, mostly of large size, and shot at a low rate of velocity by smooth-bore guns, could distinctly be seen describing their trajectory. The Marshal, in the middle of his staff, saw a projectile coming straight to the group in which he stood, and instinctively bent forward on his horse. The shot killed an officer who was exactly behind him.

A general said to his commander, 'If you had not bent your head, Your Highness would now be dead.'

'Yes,' replied the Marshal, 'I bowed just to show you, gentlemen, that we never lose anything by politeness.'

LXXVII

HEROES' JESTS

THERE are few evidences more indicative of a great mind than the power a man possesses of jesting in circumstances of grave import to himself. We all remember Leonidas, Hannibal and Nelson: how, by a few cheery or placid words, or a sentence of mirthful and buoyant levity, they instilled heroic confidence in the hearts of their companions at the supreme hour. This is a proof of rare energy. Most great men have exhibited this faculty—one of the fascinating features of their character. There are times and men and deeds wherein this quality is shown in a minor degree; but, wherever we see it manifested, we feel irresistibly drawn by sympathy towards the actor and the scene. And even when a leader of men is far from admirable in most ways, yet we cannot deny him our meed of sincere applause, if, in the midst of danger, his merry tongue reveals a composure lacking in ordinary mortals.

William Rufus showed the daring blood that flowed in his veins in a circumstance which would have made a greater hero pause. He wanted to cross the sea during a tempest, and the pilot timidly, but strongly, remonstrated. But the King persisted, and, to infuse confidence into the heart of the sailor, jestingly said,

'Man, didst thou ever hear of a king being drowned?' thus almost repeating Cæsar's words, of which he had probably never heard.

The Greek Emperor, taken in battle by the Grand Vizier Melik, being asked by his captor how he expected to be treated, replied in a playful tone, 'If you make war like a sovereign, set me free; if like a merchant, demand a ransom; if like a butcher, put me to death.' The conqueror sent him back with the honours due to a great prince—just as Alexander acted towards Porus.

When in prison Sir Thomas More knew that his life was in danger, and to someone who expressed some apprehension about his fate, he humorously said, 'All the world is but a prison out of which somebody or other is every day called to execution.'

In his last moments, Raleigh exhibited the same faculty of facing death with a smiling jest. His condemnation to the block, owing to its iniquity, was well calculated to sour his heart and upset his equanimity: but so strongly tempered was his spirit, that he viewed his fate with the same fortitude as he had shown in adventure and war. The record of his last sentences has been preserved, and although it is generally known, we think it should now and then be reproduced, if only to make sure that each generation shall be acquainted with it. The words of a brave man meeting his doom with fearlessness could not be made too familiar.

When he saw his friend, Sir Hugh Ceeston, being refused admittance on the scaffold, Raleigh said to him with a smile, 'Never fear, I am sure to find a place.' And a moment later, remarking a man, whose bald head was uncovered, the hero took off his own cap, and placing it on the old man's head, said with a kindly nod, 'Take it, friend, you will want it more than I.' Then to some

friends who were present, he gently, but firmly, said, 'I have a long journey to make and must say good-bye.' On the scaffold and close to the block he saw the axe. Coming to it, he touched it with his fingers, as if to ascertain the keenness of the edge, and smiling, 'This is a sharp medicine,' he said, 'but it will cure all diseases.' And lastly, to the headsman, who seemed unnerved by the work he was going to perform on so famous a man, Sir Walter Raleigh said loudly, 'What dost thou fear? Strike, man!' At no time of his life had Raleigh been nobler, braver and greater.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert gave proof of the same kind of fortitude as Raleigh, to whom he was related. During the storm which swallowed up his vessel, he sat impassible in the stern of his ship reading a book, and, to keep up the intrepedity of the crew, he occasionally said with a smile, 'Courage, my lads, we are just as near heaven by sea as by land.'

When Sir George Lisle, Charles I.'s general, was made a prisoner at the capture of Colchester, which he had stoutly defended, he was at once sentenced to be shot. On the ground of execution, he called upon Cromwell's soldiers to come nearer to him to take a surer aim.

A soldier swore that they should hit him.

'Friends,' he merrily replied, 'I have been nearer to you than I am now, and you have missed me.'

Louis XI. and Frederick II., so dissimilar in many respects, had one characteristic in common. Both were witty, and never denied themselves the pleasure of a cutting remark to show off their shrewdness and coolness. The King of France, in his political struggles, often aggravated his affairs by sarcastic banter. As, more than once, he was sorely made to smart in consequence

of a joke about his enemies, he one day exclaimed, 'I must say that my tongue has cost me a great deal; but, on the other hand, it has caused me intense pleasure throughout life.'

Frederick the Great, advancing in years, underwent a severe illness, so severe that he was given up for some days by his physicians, and he was apprised of it. One morning, however, he rallied; and the medical men immediately declared to him that he was out of danger. Turning towards his heir—his nephew—who very assiduously had watched by the King's bedside for days, Frederick said to him, with a significant nod and smile, 'I am very sorry, nephew, to keep you waiting.'

Thus these two sovereigns, whose policy was equally daring and equally successful, shared with other great men the quality of dealing jokes in serious moments.

LXXVIII

A HAPPY UTOPIAN

OF the three Utopias of the vanguard of the Socialists, to speak of few only, one is equality of wealth, another is the abolition of property, another is the abolition of the family. One member of the Rothschild House is credited with settling these questions in a very practical manner. To one who wrote to him a long letter of abuse upon the privileges of wealth, and wound up his epistle with a personal claim upon that share of the Rothschild capital which all Englishmen should divide equally, he replied:—

'DEAR SIR,—Taking your estimate of the British population as correct, and granting your calculation of our fortune as exact, I beg to enclose you, as your share, a post-office order for three shillings and ninepence sterling, in order to make you a contented man, and henceforth, a responsible member of society. Trusting this capital will enable you to maintain a dignified

equality with the rest of working mankind—for we are all born to work and none is entitled to remain idle, however favoured by fortune he may be, I remain, etc.'

To a young journalist of the red hue, who interviewed him for the double purpose of ascertaining a millionaire's ideas about the organisation of the family, the laws of inheritance, the constitution of property, and of converting the Rothschilds to the doctrine of abolition of these three elements of social evils, the great financier, after hearing the *exposé* of the wishes of revolutionists, replied to the interviewer by a question: 'Are you a married man?'

'No, sir.'

'Well, then, wait until you are; and when you have a wife and family, come to me again. I feel certain we shall agree on these points then just as much as we now disagree; for, when you have children, you will understand what the family is like, and, when you have property, you will no longer be ready to claim for its abolition, and will then admire the laws of inheritance as just and natural.'

The advanced representative, slightly taken aback, thoughtfully went away.

Some of the forward minds of our times, despite their craving for improvement, and their thorough devotion to the doctrine of amelioration of all social, physical, and moral conditions of the people are not quite so hard to please as the specimens of humanity just alluded to.

A Parisian artisan, of the most decided type of progress, had been drinking all his wages away, so as to attain the realisation of worldly happiness, at least so far as he was concerned. After this effectual trial, he managed to zig-zag his way to the Champs Elysées, a lengthy and difficult performance, which was accomplished in the midst of great risk without loss

of limb. But the hardship and exertion of the walk completely deprived him of his means of locomotion, and he sank, rather than sat, down, on the curb-stone. Helpless, and with his head down and nodding, but not unconscious, there he remained for a long time, vaguely seeing the string of carriages on their way to the Bois de Boulogne, and, so far as he was able, he profoundly meditated upon social problems. He now felt no unspeakable rancour against society: he dimly thought that this was, after all, perhaps, not the very worst of worlds. Finally, after many an incoherent expression of disdain at the equipages rushing by, and many a look of contempt at their occupants, he said to himself, as he later on related with pride to his companions, 'Ah! you may all of you be dukes and senators, capitalists and monopolists, *bourgeois* and aristocrats, owners of horses and stables, all of you that are served by flunkies may have your thousands a year and may eat and drink—and drink—and drink, but I care not for any of you, for none of you was ever, or will ever be more tipsy than I am.'

LXXIX

HALFPENNY A DAY

THAT great men shape events and usher in new stages for mankind, as Carlyle was fond of asserting, is true to a certain extent. An Alexander, or a Cæsar, or a Charlemagne would prove it. That momentous events, which are often brought about by obscure personages or the nature of accumulated facts, make great men is a more demonstrable proposition. How a momentous event opens a new theatre for great actors is well exemplified—to speak of one only—by the French Revolution. Without this political earthquake, how many men of genius would have remained in obscurity it is impossible to say ; but most of the striking heroes, who made the years that followed this outbreak an age of giants, would have served their country in a subordinate station, instead of towering above humanity and ennobling the annals of fame by the most marvellous roll of epic characters. Take that volcanic eruption, called the Revolution, away, and Mirabeau, Bonaparte, Nelson,

Wellington, and many others, would have lived and died, the one a writer, the other a major, the third possibly an admiral, and the fourth probably a general of note, but none of them would have reached the pinnacle of glory, and made the pages of history radiant with records of undying achievements. The Revolution opened a stage whereupon they could display the fulness of their prodigious greatness; furnished an occasion to show, in its unrivalled splendour, the whole range of human sublimity in action. And what is remarkable is that the actors of those immortal deeds were all young men. Another fact worthy of notice is that a score of them were born in 1769—the *annus mirabilis* of modern time, for that year saw the birth of *élite* minds in war, in letters, and in science. This miracle—if it be allowed to repeat a remark of Michelet's—may be ascribed to Rousseau, who, by his works, suddenly kindled an uncontrollable enthusiasm in every bosom.

This enthusiasm, communicated to the immediate offspring of his generation, infused it with innate genius, and accounts for the simultaneous appearance of so many great men.

The actions and words of the greatest in those times are well known, but the words and actions of the heroes of a lower rank well deserve to be remembered.

Joubert, who contributed his share of victories towards the conquest of Italy during Bonaparte's splendid campaign, was certainly one of the most brilliant generals of the revolutionary era. Like some other young commanders of his time—such as Hoche and Marceau—he was doomed to fall when barely thirty, and, like them, he showed, in difficult circumstances, not the valour of a hero only, but the resources and wit of a philosopher. In one of the numerous battles that were so stubbornly fought on both sides, Joubert at the head of his division observed many of his soldiers ducking their heads down at the sound of the hissing bullets crossing the air in all directions.

'Are you afraid to lose your half-a-penny a day?' shouted Joubert; 'look at your general! He has one hundred and fifty thousand livres a year, and he is not afraid! Up with your heads, and charge!'

And he led them to victory.

This coolness under fire is one of the conspicuous qualities of commanders, and it is also the first sign of military worth which a soldier will give to his general. It was by such a mark that Junot, a mere sergeant at the siege of Toulon, when he was twenty years of age, attracted Bonaparte's attention, followed soon by warm friendship. During a hot artillery duel, which was more than usually murderous, Bonaparte wanted to send a written order to insure the co-operation of a battery planted in a distant part of the field. He called out for someone who could write Out of the ranks came Junot. A soldier bent his back, and upon this living desk the young sergeant wrote under dictation. The writing was just over when a shell burst on the ground close by, and sent loose soil and gravel flying all round, covering everyone with dust, some of which also fell upon the written order.

'That's all right!' said Junot, laughing, 'we don't want sand to dry the ink.'

Bonaparte at once promoted him, and Junot rose to become a commander-in-chief, and Duke d'Abrantès.

Different, but equally heroic, was Latour-Manbourg's speech after he had suffered the amputation of his leg, a day or two after the giants' Battle of Leipsic. When the dreadful operation was over, he noticed his valet shedding tears at the foot of his bed.

'What a fool you are, man!' the general cried; 'henceforth you will have only one boot to clean instead of two. Cheer up!'

There were men in those days!

LXXX

A ROYAL MASQUERADE

THE student of history naturally considers the reign of Charles II. as the most shameful that the annals of England have on record. But the regency of Philippe d'Orleans in France, during the minority of Louis XV., was infinitely worse and more despicable. All the vices —perfidy, mendacity, jobbery, treason, flattery, ambition, effrontery, depravity, knavery—contended with one another for mastery, and made the time an age of human degradation, without a redeeming feature. The Regent's weakness and Dubois' astuteness were the wheels on which all villainies rolled along. The gratification of every low passion that can disgrace a Court was the main object of men and women, and pleasure-seeking one of the chief pursuits of life. Dubois, the basest of mortals, was, in himself, the embodiment of every kind of infamy. Almost an atheist, this minister had forced his master to make him an archbishop—the successor of Fénélon!—and a Cardinal besides! The red robe did not prevent him from taking part in the masquerades that were one of the favourite amusements of the day. The etiquette and dignity of Louis XIV.'s Court, which had become almost gloomy during the Grand Monarch's

last years, were, by a natural reaction, now replaced by universal laxity, and the demoralisation was illustrated by fooleries and buffooneries of grotesque impropriety.

On a special occasion, a masked ball was to be given which promised to be more attractive than usual, and Philippe, who could not resist the desire of being present and taking his share of the 'fun,' threw the last shred of etiquette overboard and determined to go to the entertainment. The august representative of royalty and power might honour the party by his presence as a spectator, but he could not go openly as a masker and run the risk of being recognised. Recognition, on the one hand, would lower his prestige too much, and he knew it to be low enough already. On the other hand, it was likely to bring in a tinge of decorum in the affair which would necessarily cool the spirit and mirth of the maskers, hence spoil the sport—whereas he wanted the drollery, extravagance, antics and revelry to be as unrestrained as possible, so as to make the entertainment a thing to be remembered. He could not go without a boon companion, and as Dubois alone could be his confidant under these circumstances as in all else, he said to him, 'Look here, as you will be at once known to all by your small size and your lame gait, and as people would also recognise me, if you observed a certain amount of deference for the person who stays by your side, since we shall keep together all night—you will lead all guessers astray if you buffet and chaff me, just as much as you would buffet and chaff anyone else.'

'All right,' replied Dubois, 'I will manage that; and if you are detected it shall not be my fault.'

The two Arcadians went to the famous masquerade, and enjoyed the spectacle to their heart's content. The Cardinal was soon known; although, to play all manners of pranks upon him, the maskers pretended not to see who he was.

'Eh, jolly little masker,' they said, 'who are you? You look like a weasel. And who is that sort of wax-figure mummy by your side, eh?'

And they pulled him about, and poked him in the ribs and laughed at him. But Dubois was neither a dumb nor an inactive victim; he returned 'a Roland for an Oliver,' with keen wit and smart readiness. Those who attacked him were soon only too glad to leave the field. He was in his element, and a match for everyone, whoever he or she might be, whatever he or she might do. Presently, it was his turn to take the offensive, and he pursued this masker and that with a torrent of droll sarcasm that finally made him the terror and the jester of the entertainment. But he was not content with that. He crowned his success with a feat of impudence upon which he alone could have ventured. There was Philippe—his master, the Regent, the descendant of a long line of kings, the ruler of the most beautiful kingdom on earth—who was enjoying the frolic of others, and laughed best and longest. Was he alone to go scot free and not contribute his share to the Saturnalia? Not so; for after a volley fired this way, and another volley fired that way, Dubois turned upon Philippe himself and began to chaff him, too. Philippe whispered to him, 'That's right, make my disguise impenetrable.' And Dubois, who had his own little plan to carry out to his entire satisfaction, tickled the Duke, pulled his nose, tugged at his wig, made him turn round and round, and gambolled around him with a firework of taunts, and scoffs, a whirl of tricks, and hops—shouting out, 'Jump Marquess; look alive, don't mope, keep up! Are you a mute? Gentlemen and ladies, this is the jolly Momus in the dumps, as dull as a beetle! Try to be jubilant!'

Said the Duke, *sotto voce:* 'That will do now.'

'But,' replied Dubois, in a whisper, 'they must not recognise you.'

And again he pushed the Regent about, and drove him forward with a run of kicks, which at last made the victim exclaim rather warmly, 'I say, Dubois, don't, don't disguise me so much!'

'You are safe now,' said the Cardinal; and having had his game, he made a rush at the other masqueraders.

Such was the Regency, its men, and its ways, within five years of the stately Louis XIV.! Never was there a contrast so unexpected and absolute!

LXXXI

A NARROW ESCAPE

RICHELIEU was beset by so many enemies, that on several occasions he was on the eve of falling into the King's disfavour, and losing that power which was so dear to him, but which he used so effectively for the greatness of his country and sovereign. He more than once averted undergoing the same fate as Wolsey by some signal service to the monarchy, so that, despite the opposition he daily encountered at Court, despite the longing of Louis XIII. to get rid of a minister who

made himself the master of all and everything—nobility, clergy, army, law, home and foreign policy, and even literature—the Cardinal always succeeded in energetically maintaining his hold upon power. On one occasion, the King was *worked* upon by his courtiers with such underhand and constant perseverance that at last he made up his mind to dismiss the great minister. The courtiers were jubilant. The storm was likely to break out in another twenty-four hours. Richelieu, who, at all hours of the day, so to speak, kept the most vigilant watch and the keenest eye upon the changeable moods of the prince, read his approaching fall in the King's manner and coolness, and what was more ominous, he was confirmed in his suspicions by his own spies.

At night, then, the King requested the Cardinal to proceed with him to his closet—an alarming symptom, considering the King's inward dread of facing his minister single-handed. The command was given with an affectation of imperious haughtiness—for the weak monarch wanted to gain factitious confidence and resolution by a show that would dismay the minister on the one hand, and rejoice the courtiers on the other, thereby pledging himself to an irrevocable course.

Richelieu, in the manner and the tone, saw his doom impending, and he found but one resource, viz., that of lying low for once and bending his knee in apparent humbleness. He bowed, and waited for the King to move on. The King, more sternly than before, said 'Pass on first, Eminence; are you not the master?'

The Cardinal, with his usual presence of mind, took hold of a lighted candelabra, and preceding the King replied, 'Sire, I can pass before Your Majesty only by fulfilling the office of the humblest of Your Majesty's servants.'

The words, the humility, the act, were so striking in a man who had seen the highest heads in the kingdom roll on the scaffold at his bidding, that the

King's nerve suddenly gave way, and Richelieu remained in power to the end of his life to strengthen royal power, and raise monarchy to the highest pitch of grandeur it could possibly attain. But he was nearer his fall in this particular circumstance than ever before; and he averted it by the resourceful suppleness of mind that made him a match for the shrewdest actors, just as his political genius gave him the supremacy in momentous events.

LXXXII

THE PORTRAIT

THE Marseilles people are justly proud of their city. In our time so many business towns have been embellished on a lavish scale that very few can now be pronounced ugly. But fifty years ago Marseilles would probably have carried the prize for stately beauty—at least in France, where Lyons and Bordeaux alone could at all have been compared with the ancient Phocæan city. The pride of a native of Marseilles, as regards anything Marseillese, is only second to that of a typical Yankee for anything that is American. Before the citizen of the New World, however, had fully developed into the 'Boss' of humanity, and, by universal consent, held that rank with no less honour than success, the Marseillese was the only specimen of mankind that had the face to boast coolly, though loudly, about himself, his family, friends, knowledge, pluck, and it matters not what, so long as it was Marseillese. His was the privi-

lege to stand at the head of the human race, and, to his mind, he was justified in claiming that status for one unanswerable reason, and that was that 'Marseilles was Marseilles.' He used to say, 'If Paris had a Canebière' (their best thoroughfare), 'Paris would be a little Marseilles.' And as confessedly the capital came next to Marseilles in grandeur and beauty, it was the usual desire of a Marseillese to visit it at least once, if it was only to get the opportunity of comparing its beggarly features with the lordly aspect of his own city. Yet, curiously enough, he who boldly undertook the trip, never afterwards ceased boasting to his friends at home every day of his life, in season and out of season, that he had seen Paris; as if Paris, after all, had something in it which was only to be seen and felt and enjoyed there. The traveller was happier than before the wonderful journey, for, besides matter for boasting about his native place, he had acquired a new sense — that of boasting about Paris. Marseilles was subject-matter to pelt strangers with, Paris was subject-matter to deal out to the Marseillese in boasting bouts. What adds a great deal to the amusement of the hearer, who enjoys for the first time, the swaggering flourishes of the typical Marseillese, is the physiognomy, vivacity, language and pronunciation of the man. Those who never saw a live specimen must imagine a Gascon, an Irishman and a brigand of the Abruzzi all rolled into one. He makes every mute *e* an accented *e;* rattles his *r*'s with thundering Spanish effect; sounds his final *n*'s with ringing Italian energy and rapidity; so that the French language rushes out of his lips in rough and fitful cascades, after leaping along and over the teeth, just like pebbles over a rocky declivity.

The travelled Marseillese, whom cosmopolitan experience has emancipated, is ready to concede at least one thing to the world at large—that butter-cookery

beats oil-cookery. He would not avow this to strangers; but at Marseilles, where oil is always used in cooking, he shows his superiority to his friends by despising home dishes.

A Marseillese, who had just returned from Paris, was the lion of the hour, and, surrounded by a crowd of envious friends, was 'astonishing the natives' to the best of his ability. He wound up the first sitting by a piece of news which he had cunningly reserved for the climax.

'Hé!' he cried, in his strong brogue, 'Friends, shall I reveal to your ears the most marvellous thing your humble servant has done?'

'Hé!' they exclaimed in rapture, 'surely, certainly.'

'Well, friends, I have had my portrait painted by one of the great painters in Paris.'

'Your portrait?' they shouted, in amazement.

'My portrait! by a great artist!'

'In oil?' they all asked eagerly.

'In butter,' he proudly shouted expanding his chest, as if ready to challenge anybody to boast of anything which could possibly be compared with the occurrence of which he was the sole hero. No one in Marseilles had ever done as much in Paris. He beat the record!

LXXXIII

ANCIENT RETORTS

We believe that, to the generality of readers, the most entertaining anecdotes are those which recall smart retorts. These anecdotes tickle the fancy probably better than any, and if they are inferior in many points to those which illustrate the faculties of lofty genius, they have the advantage of conveying words, which, on account of their terseness and curtness, can be easily remembered and briefly related. Both the ancients and the moderns have innumerable records of sharp sallies.

'What in the world are you hiding so carefully under your cloak?' asked an inquisitive chatterbox, to an ancient philosopher.

'I am hiding it carefully,' replied the sage, 'in order that you may not know what it is.'

A retort which should be one of our stock replies to the ubiquitous Paul Pry.

To a man who loudly boasted before Aristotle of being a citizen of a famous city: 'It would be more to the point,' said the great inductive philosopher, 'if you could boast of being worthy of a great city.'

Diogenes was once preparing a cabbage for his meal, when Aristippus came upon him.

'Ah!' said the latter, 'if you would only court princes, you would not be obliged to feed on cabbage.'

'And if you would only eat cabbage, you would not be obliged to court princes,' retorted the cynic philosopher.

Diogenes, however, once got his answer. He went to Plato's house, and trampling with contempt upon the carpet which covered the floor, he cried to Plato, 'This is the way I tread upon your pride!'

'With more pride than I have!' quietly replied the sublime sage.

It was the custom in antiquity for persons who had escaped sea dangers or shipwreck to have a picture, representing the scene or circumstance of the occurrence, offered to the gods and hung up in the temples as a memorial of gratitude. These pictures were called ex-voto, because they had been 'vowed' to the divinity in the perilous hour. The poet, Diagoras, was being shown these by a pious man as a proof of the existence of the gods.

'I see represented here,' he said, 'those who have been saved from shipwreck, but where are represented all those who perished at sea?'

It is considered very bad taste, to say the least, to make an allusion to a proper name with the open or covert intention of laughing at its bearer. The ancients took the same view as ourselves on the subject, and no less than ourselves, nevertheless, indulged in this breach of good taste for the sake of a joke. In fact, it supplied

Roman pleaders, who often were as barren as our own advocates in original wit, with a favourite kind of cheap sarcasm. A member of the ancient bar, less famous for integrity than for impudence, was once inveighing against the opposite counsel whose name was Catulus (little dog), objecting particularly to the loud tone in which Catulus had pleaded against him. 'What, I should like to know,' he ended by saying, 'can be the cause of so much *yelping?*'

'It is because I see a *thief!*' readily said the witty Catulus.

A pleader in Rome, whose eloquence was of the inferior order, was, however, under the delusion that his speeches had a Ciceronian ring about them. Once, after a long discourse, he asked Catulus, 'Do you not think I have succeeded in making a very *moving* speech?'

'You certainly have,' Catulus replied, 'for some of your audience pitied you, and the rest walked out of Court.'

LXXXIV

MODERN RETORTS

If the Ancients proved their quickness of mind in many instances and showed that they could not be excelled in ready wit, yet the moderns have certainly been their equals. And although it is true we possess only a fraction of the fine sallies which the Greeks and Romans could have bequeathed to us, yet it does not seem presumptuous on our part to think that, owing to the much wider range of our civilisation as compared with that of antiquity, owing to the many professions now existing which were unknown formerly, owing to our multiplied opportunities, our wealth of smart speeches is much more extensive. Ours may not be more precious, but it is more varied.

Julius II. and Henry II. had a very fierce quarrel about some territorial possession in Italy, and the Pope summoned the King of France before God's own tribunal to answer for his political delinquencies.

'I shall be there,' wrote the King, 'but I feel certain the Pope will not.'

The Marquis del Carpio, Viceroy of Naples, once, coming out of church, received holy water from a lady, whose hand, bejewelled with a large diamond, was much wrinkled. The grandee, whose impertinence was equal to his pride, had the impudence to say, 'I had rather have the ring than the hand.'

'And I,' exclaimed the lady, who at the same time seized hold of the rich collar of the order which hung from the Marquis's neck, 'I had rather have the halter than the donkey.'

Henry of Navarre, after the capture of Chartres received the keys of the city from the Sheriffs, and these, upon addressing their humble compliments to the victorious prince, tried to screen their defeat and shame under the guise of a specious figure.

'Sire,' they said, 'the town belongs to you by the force of divine law and human law.'

'And by the force of *cannon* law, gentlemen,' archly added Henry IV.

The same King was once conferring the Ribbon of his Order upon a courtier who had been warmly recommended by the Duke of Nevers as a fit recipient for the honour. As the gentleman was kneeling before the King, and pronouncing the usual knightly, 'I am unworthy of such a favour.'

'I know that,' replied Henry IV., 'but I give it to you to please our cousin, Duke of Nevers.'

James I. delighted in nothing so keenly as poking fun at his subjects. Having once tried it upon a Scotchman.

'Upon my soul,' cried the intended victim, 'he that made Your Majesty a king spoilt the best fool in Christendom.'

Charles II., seeing Killigrew enter the hall in which he was merrily conversing with his usual companions, at once remarked, 'Oh! now we are going to hear of our faults.'

Killigrew, with that rude sincerity that made him famous at the time, replied at once, 'It is quite un-

necessary for me to talk about a thing that is a subject of general conversation.'

The satirical epitaph which the witty Rochester wrote at his master's request has ever been considered a little gem, being no more severe upon Charles II. than it was just. It bears repeating because of the no less witty rejoinder of the merry King.

> Here lies our sovereign lord, the King,
> Whose word no man relies on;
> Who never said a foolish thing,
> And never did a wise one.

'This is easily accounted for,' said the King, when he first heard the epitaph read; 'my discourse is my own; my actions are my ministers'.'

The great pulpit orator, Fléchier, was the son of a candle-maker. A duke who wanted to humble the famous preacher by making him feel his inferiority of birth, said, 'Father, it is a pity your eloquence retains the smell of candle grease.'

'It is quite possible, my Lord Duke,' answered Fléchier, 'I may still be recognised by the smell of my father's trade, but if you had been born the son of a candle-maker, a candle-maker you would have remained all your life.'

Two financial princes, called Thevenain and Bourvalais, who were important personages in their day, fell out after some transaction, and if they did not come to blows they did at least abuse each other to the best of their power. The Parthian shot was of the same kind as in the previous anecdote.

'Remember,' cried Thevenain, 'that you have been my valet.'

'If you had been mine,' replied Bourvalais, 'you would be mine still.'

It is not rare to see a student, who is becoming inflated with a little learning, assuming airs of superior wisdom, and coolly daring to perpetrate an impertinence

upon his betters. A University student, who had just heard the funeral oration delivered by Fléchier in honour of Turenne, said ironically to his private tutor, 'When will you speak like this, doctor?'

'When you are a Turenne,' the shrewd professor retorted.

'You have, I suppose,' said once Frederick II. to Zimmermann, his medical attendant, 'helped many a man to pass into the next world?'

'Not so many as Your Majesty, nor with so much honour,' replied the doctor.

A count, and a courtier to boot, whose estate was limited to a place at Court, said to a smart ecclesiastic, whom, much to his annoyance, he often met in the company of ladies, 'Sir Abbé, I should much like to hear where your abbey is?'

'In your county, Sir Count,' answered the elegant Abbé.

Swift and Pope were not badly matched in readiness of wit.

'They think in Ireland, Mr Pope,' said the Dean, 'that you are a great poet and a little man.'

'And in England,' retorted Pope, 'people think the very reverse of you.'

D'Alembert and his old nurse had once an altercation, and the old dame reproached her grown-up ward for being unpractical.

'You will never be anything but a philosopher,' she wound up, by way of a peroration.

'A philosopher?' inquired d'Alembert, much amused at the insult of the irate dame; 'what do you mean?'

'I mean a fool who grunts of misery all his life, in order that people may speak of him when he is dead.'

Voltaire, who had praised Mr de Haller, heard that the latter did not praise him—far from it. 'Then we are probably both mistaken,' he at once exclaimed.

Doyen, the painter, was once riding on horseback when he was met by M. de Lauragais, who burst out laughing at his equestrian venture. 'Each one is best at his own trade, sir,' cried the artist in return; 'I have seen you paint.'

George III., who was visiting one of his men-of-war, said to Lord Lothian, his chamberlain, pointing to the lofty riggings of the ship, 'People say you are very nimble, my Lord, I should like to see it.'

'My duty,' replied the Lord, 'is to follow Your Majesty.'

A wealthy nobleman was twitting a man of science about the beggarly condition of the learned.

'Why are you constantly knocking at our doors?' said he, 'we never trouble you with our visits.'

'We are often at your gates,' replied the sage, 'and you rich men never at ours, because we, men of learning, know the worth of riches, and you, men of wealth, seldom know the value of science.'

The Count St Jean d'Angély was, in a debate, speaking against the Abbé Maury with great warmth.

'I consider him as a man of no worth whatever,' he shouted, 'and his speeches are more despicable than himself.'

'I am worth very little, it is true, when I consider my intrinsic merit,' replied Maury; 'but I consider myself worth a good deal when I compare myself with others.'

But ordinary mortals often equal great men in appropriate retorts.

A pleading advocate, whose wig had shifted sideways, saw his learned opponent's eye directed towards it, not without the accompaniment of a merry smile.

'Has my wig,' he fiercely asked the opposite Counsel, 'anything ridiculous in it, learned brother?'

'Nothing but the head, learned brother,' replied the other.

A young fop was once introducing a friend of his to a lady, and, to display unusual wit, 'Madam,' said he, 'I beg to introduce to you my friend, Mr Sterne, who is not so foolish as he looks.'

'That is the only difference between us, madam,' added the friend.

'I see it is,' rejoined the lady.

Two Scotch parsons, hurrying in opposite directions, knocked each other's heads at the corner of a street.

'My head resounds from the blow, sir,' exclaimed one.

'Not surprising, it is empty,' exclaimed the other; 'mine does not resound.'

'How could it?' was the rejoinder; 'it is cracked.'

Nash, who was fond of raising the laugh at other people's expense, once tried his favourite device upon a young lady from the country. After several flippant and supercilious questions, the 'beau' wound up, 'Now, my dear,' he inquired, 'can you tell me what was the name of Toby's dog?'

'Nash,' replied the young lady, readily, 'and an impudent dog he was.'

A miller riding a donkey was quietly proceeding to market, when a wag met him on the road, and said, 'Where are you both going, friends?'

'To market,' replied the countryman, to fetch provender for the three of us, my dear sir.'

An English veteran, who had received the medal after the great war, was asked by a Frenchman what might be the value of the honourable mark of honour he wore on his breast.

'It is only worth half-a-crown.'

'It is very little,' rejoined his interlocutor.

'It may be,' was the answer, 'but it cost you a Napoleon.'

These anecdotical snips prove the truth and wisdom of the famous maxim that a man should bite his tongue seven times before he venture to utter a stinging speech.

LXXXV

THE TESTATOR AND HIS STEWARD

If all stations in life, high or low, are beset by some evils, there are few in which compensations do not, in a certain measure, make up for the injuries which fortune will often deal. And among the humble classes there is hardly a doubt but that steady servants frequently find an adequate set-off against the drawbacks of their trying condition.

A Japanese household, according to Sir Arthur Arnold, is especially cheerful, placid and dispassionate —masters and servants live in unruffled harmony. In Japan, we are told, there is an old servant in every rich family, whose duty consists in 'warning his master of the mistakes he makes and the defects he is contracting.' This is difficult to realise; but if the custom exists it must exercise great influence over the temper of the chief of a

family. It is pretty certain that in a society thus constituted Figaro could not have inquired of his master, as he did of Count Almaviva, 'How many masters would have qualities enough to make good servants?' Be this as it may, a candid censor was probably not too severe with us when he said that 'we easily forget we owe our servants some kindly feeling on account of their inferior status, and ought to avoid anything that is likely to remind them of their position.' If we only endeavoured, ever so slightly, to raise them in their own estimation, and inspire them with self-respect, love of duty would soon follow and soon insure their devotion to us. Considering that the comfort and economy of a family depend in a great degree upon servants, the choice of them demands particular care; but their attention to our interest mainly springs from our prudent treatment of them. Well treated, they quickly feel affection for us, and are only too glad to serve us with unswerving fidelity. When this is the case they have a right to think themselves members of the family—a rare occurrence in these days; for, unfortunately, a master is often too exacting; he expects perfection in his servants and reprimands them for the slightest trifles—of al' courses the quickest to dishearten them and alienate their attachment. Should we not enter more into their feelings, and try to understand with sympathy the afflictions which must secretly break their hearts? A poet has described their sorrows in pathetic words:—

'We are of every house, and every house can be closed against us; we belong to a family, and that family can cast us off; we bring up children as if they were our own, and when we have brought them up, they do not recognise us any longer as their mothers; we spare and save the property of our masters, and what we have saved goes to others than ourselves without the slightest recognition; we become attached to the hearth, the tree, the well, the dog; and the hearth, the tree, the well, the dog are taken away from us if it so please our masters; the master dies and

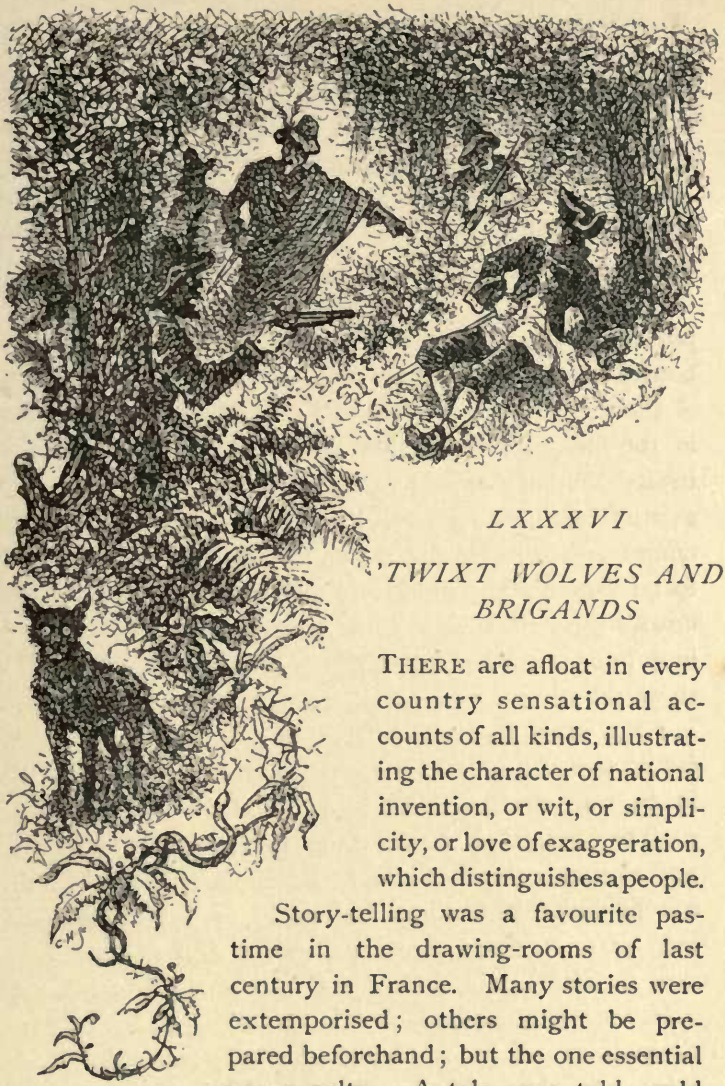
we have no right to wear mourning for him! Relatives without relationship, hearts that give themselves and are not received, such is the destiny of us servants!'

Those, unhappily, are not the sentiments which sway the majority of domestics. The following story is doubtless applicable to a certain number.

A wealthy gentleman, on his death-bed, but in full possession of his faculties, was, in the presence of his household and relatives, dictating his last bequests, a list of those concerning his servants having just been hung up in the hall. The dictation over, the will was read. It recited the legacies left to his near and distant relations, as well as to his servants, each of whom had a suitable annuity—except the steward. When the will was about to be signed, the steward, convinced that his master had unwittingly left him out, said aloud, 'And am I to be forgotten?—I who have been for twenty years your steward?'

'My man,' answered the gentleman, 'I have left you out of my will precisely because you have been my steward for twenty years.'

The steward abstained from any further protest, being probably convinced of the wisdom and justice of his excellent master.



LXXXVI

'TWIXT WOLVES AND BRIGANDS

THERE are afloat in every country sensational accounts of all kinds, illustrating the character of national invention, or wit, or simplicity, or love of exaggeration, which distinguishes a people.

Story-telling was a favourite pastime in the drawing-rooms of last century in France. Many stories were extemporised; others might be prepared beforehand; but the one essential was novelty. A tale once told could not be repeated. Truth and probability were secondary elements of success—to amuse the company was the chief object of the speaker.

'When I was a young man,' related a gentleman to a numerous company of ladies and gentlemen, with powdered hair and wigs, and dainty court costumes, 'I was exceedingly fond of adventures, and courted danger for the sake of emotion out of the common, although,

to speak the truth, I was by no means as brave as might have been desirable. I will tell you the most thrilling of my experiences. But I must beg our kind hostess to order the servants to put out the lights before I begin.'

This being done he proceeded. 'You know that many parts of Burgundy are covered with dense and extensive woods, most of which are the abode of wild beasts—boars, wolves, foxes, wild dogs, stags, and other denizens of inhospitable forests. It is not rare, even now—especially in winter—to see packs of wolves running about for prey. For this reason, these woods are the dread of lonely travellers, and for this reason, too, very few are the narrow paths by which they are traversed. There was, in particular, a forest—covering several square leagues of hilly ground, and not very far from human dwellings, which was dreaded beyond all others. It was known to be the habitat of numerous beasts of prey prowling in every direction. This, however, was not the most threatening danger one had to encounter in it, for it was far more perilous on account of the robbers who infested it, and found it an inaccessible refuge. Frightful stories were told about the ferocity and bloodthirstiness of these irreclaimable brigands. The King's police had vainly attempted to put them down; but for one or two that were taken and quartered five new recruits would fill up the gap made in the bands. These reports excited my imagination, and made me desirous of seeing for myself what this terrestrial Hades was like. It had a curious fascination for me, and I thought it would be a feat to remember and relate if I ventured into this deadly hot-bed of savagery and came out of it unscathed.

'Many a time and oft did I make up my mind to try, and as often desisted, my valour not being on a par with my adventurous spirit by any means. After planning, over and over again, my line of action, I thought that, after all, the danger was not perhaps so very great.

I would take a purse and, if suddenly confronted, give it up smilingly at the first summons. I would go without weapons, to show I meant to harm no one. Should I go? Should I not? At last I decided to run the risk.

'It was in the beginning of winter. I started one morning and approached the forest with excessive caution screening myself as much as possible. That was easily accomplished, for the brushwood was pretty thick, and I could walk from one thicket to another without being seen. About twelve o'clock I reached the forest, and congratulated myself upon my success and pluck so far. I listened—not a sound was to be heard.

'I had intended merely to skirt the wood, but, when I saw and heard nothing alarming I thought it would be ridiculous to retrace my footsteps too soon. I might just as well—since I had done so much—go a little further than I meant at first; and having so decided, I walked for some time straight into the forest. Soon, feeling hungry, I thought it would be another feather in my cap if I could tell my friends that I had actually sat down and taken a meal in the terrible wood—not in the middle quite but yet a good distance—a mile, two miles from the border. So I sat down rather proudly, and began to draw my eatables out of my game bag. I never made a more delicious meal nor a more exciting one. "Fancy," said I, to myself, "here I am, alone, and, Spartan-like, eating and drinking on the brink of a precipice, and surrounded by certain, though unknown, perils." A thrill of pride ran through me at the thought. Within a few seconds a thrill of terror suddenly chilled my veins! Close behind me there was a rush, then another, a crash in the brushwood, a whirl of dead leaves; and, automatically turning round, I caught sight of a scurvy rabbit and a rascally fox running through the bush. Did not I curse the abominable vermin, thus of a sudden to spoil my sport! I voted the rabbit to a saucepan, and the fox to a trap, for the turn they had

given me. Recovering slowly from the shock, I finished my repast, and fortified my spirits with a draught of brandy, thinking, meanwhile, that having accomplished my daring feat, I now might decamp as quickly as I could. I therefore immediately got up and hastened to walk in the direction, as I fancied, of the edge of the wood, taking care to keep on the *qui-vive*.

'But instead of coming out into the open country within an hour's time, as I expected, I found to my great dismay that I had gone astray. . . . I was lost! . . . Instinct of preservation, increased tenfold by my growing fear, gave me such additional energy, that I persevered walking with feverish speed for some two hours, until, in fact, night closed upon me. Then, as it was no good to attempt further efforts in the darkness, I sat, full of cruel apprehension, against a tree for the night. I was so exhausted that, despite my intention to keep on the look-out, I gradually fell asleep.

'How long I slept I could not say, but I was aroused by a sort of a whoop. Imagine my sensation! There, in the gloom of a dark night, lost in a dire forest full of wild animals and savage brigands, benumbed with fatigue, there was I, defenceless, and on the point of being attacked, and perhaps devoured. I shivered with fear. My limbs shook convulsively, my blood seemed a frozen stream coursing through my arteries, my heart beat audibly, my temples throbbed as if to burst, and a loud buzzing in my brain almost deafened me. Another whoop, prolonged into a horrible *crescendo*, added to my terror and agony. What was it? Wild beasts or robbers? And I had no weapon but a stick to defend myself with. Soon there was another of these terrifying howls more to the right, succeeded by another behind me —far away, it is true, but none the less frightful on that account. A different sensation, several times renewed, curdled my blood. The dead leaves on the ground rustled near me, and I heard a wolf gallop by, running

away from the yells. Another, panting like a dog, actually passed over my legs at a trot, and stopped within a few yards of me, sniffing the air. He had smelt my presence, but a yell, luckily for me, drove him along. Then there was another prolonged howl in the direction facing me. Then, to increase my horror—oh, how I wished I might swoon outright and be unconscious!—to increase my horror, I say, I suddenly descried a distant light, a moving light, appearing and disappearing, going this way and that way, now upwards now downwards; and, in rapid succession, came several more whoops and howls, but from what direction I was scarcely able to make out. On my left, another distant light became visible, which moved about in the same way as the first, and more howls followed. What were those lights? Could they be wills-o'-the-wisp? Hardly, thought I, for we were in winter. And, enfeebled as I was then, physically, I almost wandered in my mind. "Are they," said I, "spirits and ghosts, the floating souls of the victims who have been murdered in these appalling woods?" How I cursed my vanity! How could I have been such a senseless idiot as to undertake so useless an adventure?

'But these reflections passed through my dazed mind like flitting arrows through a mist. I had no time, moreover, to meditate upon my folly, for already the forest resounded with yells and whoops on all sides; lights seemed to multiply, as by enchantment, all around, and although the human howls, as I now recognised them to be, and the moving lights were still distant, I fancied that they formed a kind of circle, and were approaching nearer and nearer. More and more horror-struck, I shook with feverish despair. I now shut my eyes and resigned myself to my inevitable fate. The yells were becoming louder, and what was more fearful still, was that I now heard, at short intervals, comprehensible words. . . . "He is about here!" "I saw him in this part!" "Come on!" "He cannot be far off!" "This way; we'll find

him!" "I see footsteps; they are his." All these incoherent words—only too plain to me—were roared, in the midst of shrill whoops and signal howls, by distinct, horrid voices, all different in hoarseness, harshness and gruffness. I now ventured to open my eyes, and what did I catch sight of? Black phantoms, some carrying torches, hurrying hither and thither, fleeting across the trees, gradually coming towards me. These spectres were decidedly human — robbers, in fact — and were twenty or thirty in number. Most of them, as far as I could distinguish, for I was as in a dream and the victim of a ghastly nightmare—were in long trailing cloaks turned to rags, had broad-brimmed and pointed hats, in which were stuck bristling feathers, and, of course, firearms and clanging swords. And as the torches cast a lurid glare in front of their hideous bearers, and projected behind them long, trembling, fitful, weird-like shadows, each brigand seemed a fire-faced vampire flapping his monstrous dark wings in the gloom. . . . I closed my eyes again, and, almost unconscious, shaking like a leaf, I waited for my doom. . . . Perhaps they *might* pass by and miss me, and I should be saved. I was not kept long in suspense, however. "Here he is!" I heard a diabolical voice shout close to me, and the brute who spoke laughed like a demon. "Come here, all of you," he added, "we've got him at last!" A tramping of hurrying feet ensued, accompanied by yells of exultation. I almost felt the breathing of the score of ruffians now around me. All but dead I opened my eyes. I wanted to say "Purse," but my tongue was glued to my palate, and my parched throat refused to utter a sound. I tried to reach my pocket for my purse so as to hold it up as an offering, but my arm was paralysed with fear, and only moved convulsively. One, with fiery eyes and a shaggy beard, who seemed the chief, said slowly, in a hollow voice, "Shall we skin him or burn him alive?"

'"Too much trouble, captain," a robber replied; "a

spy deserves but a stab from each of us. We only want his hands and feet to nail to a tree. Let us despatch the snake and go to supper. It is nearly midnight, and the boiled bacon will be done to a pulp if we loiter here."

'"Right!" they all shouted.

'In a moment, twenty or more gleaming daggers were lifted; twenty fiendish faces bent over me. My eyes instinctively closed, and an icy numbness ran in throbs through my frame. The chief shouted, "One two, three. . . ." I saw and heard nothing more . . .' faintly said the story-teller, in tremulous tones, as if overpowered by the recollection of the ordeal.

The audience was breathless. Not even the flutter of a fan could be heard. But a lady, who could just command nerve enough to speak, said, 'Well, how did you escape?'

'Escape!' replied the hero quickly; 'escape! I was killed in the twinkling of an eye!'

A peal of laughter relieved every soul present, and rewarded the imaginative speaker.

LXXXVII

VOLTAIRE'S NIECE

'THE Danes,' some French writer once said, in describing the Danish language, 'have a sort of bark, like dogs, whereby they understand one another, as animals do.'

This is not a bad specimen of the crude ideas the French, up to a hundred years ago, used to form when travelling abroad. Even in these days they are notoriously bad linguists. But they were infinitely worse in this respect in former times, because the writers of France had spread their language over all Europe. Every person who had the least pretension to being educated, whether English, Russian, German, Spanish or Italian spoke and wrote French, so that the French people considered themselves *the* polished nation of the world, and consequently disdained to waste their time and exert their brains in learning what they called outlandish and barbarous tongues. This was the more natural to them, also because the French language, on account of its comparative clearness in diction, phraseology and construction, was then, as it is still to a certain extent, the language of European diplomacy, the usual medium of international intercourse, not unlike what Latin had been in the Middle Ages. This state of things did not date from Louis XIV.'s reign; it preceded that period by hundreds of years. The Crusades, inaugurated by

France, and mainly carried on by her for two centuries, had made her language a necessity almost European: so much so that the Venetian, Marco Paolo, wrote his famous book of travels (1296) in French, although the Italian language was more polished, and the Italian poets and prose writers were far greater in his time, than those France could then boast of.

The French then wholly neglected foreign languages in the belief that their own tongue possessed every kind of superiority. French is limpid and flexible, animated and refined it is true; it is varied and coloured, picturesque and delicate beyond any other language; its vocabulary is, by its richness, adapted to every kind of style. Poets find in it a diction full of elevation, nobility and splendour; orators, one of energy, passion and magnificence; conversationalists, one of vivacity, freedom and brightness. It abounds in happy turns of construction, in delicate expressions, in elegant aphorisms, in severe exactness, and in idiomatic power; but it wants vigorous sonority and musical harmony such as are possessed by Italian and Spanish. Its mute syllables are so frequent that they deaden its resonance. The French, not feeling this weakness—for they take clearness of enunciation for musical sonority—are fond of placing their language in the foremost rank, and they despise other languages in consequence. They forgot what the Emperor Charles V. said, 'Each new tongue I learn seems to add another mind to my own. Benjamin Constant expressed almost the same appreciation, or rather added to it, when he said that foreign languages make our own thoughts young again, by ridding them of the stereotyped forms which make them by turn laboured or commonplace. Does not the apologue of Æsop upon the organ of speech apply to speech itself? The reader may recollect that when the great fabulist was a cook, his master ordered him to prepare the best possible dinner the culinary art was

capable of producing, and Æsop had ox, calf and sheep tongues dressed up in all manners of ways, and served with all sorts of sauces and all kinds of spice. His master reprimanded him for his want of invention, since he had used the very best materials; and, in order to tax his ingenuity, ordered him to prepare a dinner out of the very worst materials. The clever slave served tongues again, and, being rebuked, intimated that the tongue, according to the way it was used, was either the best or the worst thing in the world. And so it is with speech itself. A language may degenerate and be corrupted—become commonplace—by usage, and a foreign element engrafted upon it, may renew its youth and beauty. That is what Constant meant when he warned his countrymen. Nowadays, however, the French learn other tongues than their own; they may, in time, become remarkable linguists.

Voltaire who, as an exile, stayed in London for two or three years, and diligently learned how to speak and write English, had such a high appreciation of the language and literature, that he made the latter known in France and Europe as an inexhaustible mine of poetry, philosophy and science.

He advised his niece, Mademoiselle Denise, to acquire English, so as to read the writings of Bacon, Locke, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Addison and Pope—those writers whose works had delighted him and opened his own mind to new ideas. But, as his niece was well educated, she thought French good enough for all purposes, even for the purpose of knowing foreign literature. Were not translations good enough to know all about it?

'No,' said Voltaire, 'all the beauty of style, all the exquisite charm of the language is sacrificed in translations, and if you find in them the thoughts of authors, you do not find what makes these thoughts intellectual gems in a precious setting. Learn English.'

She began. After a few lessons, being inveterately French, she thought English most illogical in its pronunciation; a defect which is undeniable, but which French also shares in a great degree. Ignoring this, however, she expressed to her English master her astonishment with all the petulance and thoughtlessness of a French young lady of the eighteenth century.

'You English,' she said, 'you are, indeed, a curious people! Why in the world should you write "bré-ad," that which you pronounce "bred"? Why do you not at once and simply say "*du pain*"?'

Voltaire was so amused at this, that he was never tired of relating the story.

LXXXVIII

TIT FOR TAT

SIMPLE, easy and elegant manners are the best card of introduction, and are, it is often said, the first elements of the sympathy and affection we may inspire in others. Being a bar against an unfavourable impression, they should never be forgotten even in the smallest things. They generally are the exterior garments of moral character, and should be fitting to our individuality, just as our dress should fit our physical form. Are not our tone, language and exterior, the very emanations of our habits, feelings and hearts? And because they are so considered, they attract, they charm and they sway. Common sense and intercourse with good company do just as much for the improvement of our manners, as study and reflection do for the soundness of our judgment. If one term were capable of expressing these qualities, we should say that 'tact' was that word—tact, the indispensable passport in the world. To possess tact is to possess the faculty of guessing in others what is still hidden, divining feelings that are still invisible, foreseeing by intuition sentiments that are concealed beneath the surface and ready to disclose themselves. Lord Chesterfield did not forget to expound this important matter.

'Be sure,' he said, 'when you are received in a house

to see at once which is the person in the family to whom the greatest regard is paid. And pay particular attention to that person.'

The absence of tact, which is almost equivalent to the absence of good manners—has been the ruin of many people. Speech in society, however witty we may fancy ourselves, demands tact beyond all things; for our wit will soon be forgotten, whereas our want of tact will always be remembered as a proof of foolishness, and will remain a spot on our reputation for good breeding.

In a drawing-room full of people, one of the guests, a young beau, who wanted to attract general attention to his good looks by a show of wit in keeping with them, said to the lady of the house in a loud voice and in a tone of affected loftiness, 'Madam, could you tell us the difference which exists between woman and a mirror?'

'I am afraid I must give it up,' replied the lady.

'Well, then, dear madam,' he said in an attitude copied from actors, and intended to display his torso to the admiration of the ladies, and in a tone of lordly intellect intended to show his superiority over his fellowmen, 'it is that a mirror always reflects and woman never does.'

He had gained his object:—all eyes were now fixed upon him.

The lady, undismayed by the momentary victory of the young lord of creation, said to him, 'Exceedingly good! And you, my dear sir, could you tell us the difference there is between men and a mirror?'

'Ah! as to that,' replied the elegant young man, still retaining his fine attitude, 'I am sure I cannot tell.'

'Well, then,' rejoined the lady, with a laughing smile, 'it is that a mirror never loses its polish, and men often do!'

'Quite true!' exclaimed everyone in a loud chorus.

The flexible torso of the young wit lost its lovely lines to assume the stiffness of a stick; and, as 'tit for tat' was heard on all sides, the discomfited beau disappeared as by enchantment.

LXXXIX

PRAWNS

LITERARY criticism during the eighteenth century was, at times, exceedingly fierce. It went far beyond the limits which are nowadays assigned to it by common consent. Not the works of an author were alone attacked and cut to pieces, but the writer himself, his person, origin, looks, and even his domestic life were brought to light, and turned into ridicule, with the most fervid rancour and relentless animosity. Party feeling was the main cause of this ugly feature of literary manners. The penmen of the Jesuit set—since all conservative and reactionary writers were conveniently grouped in the same category—assailed tooth and nail, the encyclopædists—the exponents of new ideas. These, in their turn, denounced their opponents with a vehemence and passion, a resentment and indignation which enlisted popular sympathy, and carried everything before them.

The epigrams of the time show to what lengths the two parties could go. Of all the men who fought the losing battle—for who could have made head against the host led by Voltaire?—Fréron was the most unscrupulous and scurrilous. Voltaire well-nigh extinguished him with one blow:—

L'autre jour au fond d'un vallon,
Un serpent piqua Jean Fréron ;
Que pensez—vous qu'il arriva ?
Ce fut le serpent qui creva !

For his continuous onslaughts on the van of the Encyclopædic army Fréron was held in particular detestation, and regarded more as a venomous thing than a human opponent. Piron, who was in the opposite camp, and, consequently, had had literary tussles with Fréron, had, curiously enough, remained on speaking terms with him ; so that, although there was an open breach between them as to ideas and literature, yet there was no actual personal enmity.

Once Piron was to give a bachelor's dinner, and, wishing for one day at least, to let bygones be bygones, he invited Fréron.

'No,' said Fréron, archly, 'you are too satirical ; you bite right and left, and I would only accept if you promised not to open your mouth, except to eat and drink.'

'But,' replied Piron, 'how can a host promise such a thing, or keep his promise in the warmth of conviviality ?'

'Well,' rejoined the other, 'you can easily answer 'yes or no to everyone, and that would do.'

'Why,' said Piron, 'you would surely allow me to say a few words ?'

'Oh, I should not mind three or four words,' replied Fréron.

'Well, then,' said Piron, laughing, 'I will not exceed that, so you must come.'

'Very well, then, I will,' answered Fréron.

The dinner took place, and the numerous guests made it as merry as possible. The news and intrigues of the day, epigrams and impromptus, jokes and counter-jokes, sallies and repartees were as comical as they were animated, and only increased in rapidity and wit as the repast proceeded.

Like a war-horse tied to a post, who hears, on all sides, the trumpet call for the charge, and kicks, and rears, and plunges, but cannot rush away, Piron, tied by his promise, was inwardly restless and boiling, feverish and fuming. Every second, he was on the point of letting off the thousand sparks, with which the liveliness around charged his mind. A Leyden-jar is no more ready to flash vivid electricity, than he was to fire off quibs and *pasquinades.*

In the course of the repast, an immense dish of shrimps and prawns, meant to enliven drooping appetite, went round, and Fréron shouted, 'Ha! prawns! They are the thing for me! I would eat as many prawns as Samson killed Philistines!'

'With the same jaw,' ejaculated Piron, loudly.

A roar met this four-word sally. Piron, unable to restrain himself any longer, had relieved his feelings, and paid Fréron out for putting him on the rack. And, though Fréron feebly laughed, too, it was evident the shot had told; for he ate very few prawns, and, by-and-by, was as silent as Piron himself. But, as the din and drollery went on, Fréron had the good sense to say, 'Monsieur Piron, I release you from your promise. Let us be merry!'

A hurrah of approbation restored harmony and good humour.

Moral: Be not too exacting.

An allusion to the Jewish hero was once made in a different circumstance, but with a pretty similar rider.

A gentleman in the ancient travelling days found in an inn nothing better to eat than advanced Stilton cheese, and was, from sheer hunger, obliged to eat it. Relating the hardship in polite society, he thought that he had better put it into verse. He began:—

> 'Like Samson, I my thousands slew—'
> 'And with the self-same weapon, too!'

shouted some one, by way of finishing the couplet.

XC

FREE-SPOKEN PREACHERS

PREACHERS, nowadays, have no longer the daring mind and fearless tone of their predecessors. The admonitions and reproofs, the blame and reprobation launched by religious advisers of former ages were often conveyed in language of extreme violence. Direct censure, vituperation, invectives were often shot from the pulpit in rapid succession, accompanied by unsparing sneers, gross satire, even foul abuse, and expressed in words which are as rare at present as they were frequent then. Earnestness against sin was so energetic that

the most refined ears tolerated rebuke in every key. In modern days, this manner of imparting advice has completely died out, and the change is certainly an improvement. Sermons are more tame, no doubt, but they harmonise with our better taste, our notions of persuasion, and our ideas of religious instruction. We consider that the solemnity attached to all that is delivered to us as a divine message should exclude violent outbreaks in thought and in expression. If preachers are now less boisterous and fierce, they are none the less sincere and weighty, and do not shrink from expressing their disapprobation when necessary.

There is one thing, however, in which they seem less rigid in their duty than the ancient clergy. The priests of old had the courage to act towards princes as they did towards common sinners, and they dealt their blows with impartiality to all men alike, regardless of rank, despite the risk of losing favour and of incurring danger.

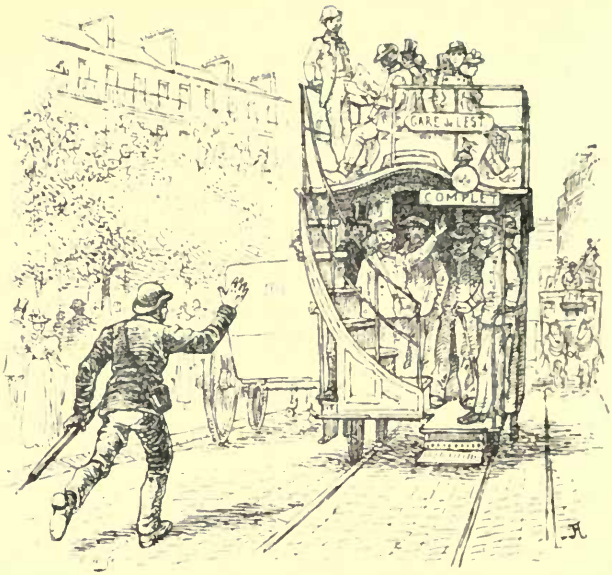
Louis XI., so much dreaded for his stern rule by his subjects, high and low, was not very tolerant as we all know. He was especially jealous of his authority, and easily angered. The least appearance of censure was followed by prompt punishment, and men spoke of him and his actions with bated breath. He had two means of enforcing submission—the dungeon and the gibbet. Sometimes, to spare the busy arms of Tristan-the-Hermit, whose time was mostly engaged in hanging, there was another way of disposing of an obnoxious person. Upon a hint given by the King, either with a frown or a smile, a man was seized without the least warning, thrust into a sack, sewn up, and flung into the river. The whole thing was sometimes disposed of in less then twenty minutes. A certain preacher, Olivier Maillard by name, offended the King in his sermons, on more than one occasion, by broad allusions to the Prince's faults. Louis XI.,

entertaining a certain deference towards the Church and its ministers, bore the ordeal several times, but did not bear it long. Once, after a homily more offensive than had been the case before, he sent word to the priest—an unusual act of condescension on his part—that the river was running deep and sacks were plentiful. 'Tell the King,' replied the bold preacher to the messenger, 'that I shall go to Paradise quicker by water than he will by the post'—which was a recent institution. The King, terrified by this answer, abstained from executing his threat.

Later, when piety had for a time suddenly degenerated into indifference, Charles II., in church with his courtiers, went to sleep during the sermon, and more than one nobleman indulged in a reposing nap. The preacher, Dr South, shouted very loud, 'Lord Lonsdale, pray do not snore quite so loud; you are going to wake the King.' The whole congregation was alive in an instant.

Is there a priest in Christendom at present who would incur the risk of losing his life, like Father Maillard, or the Court's favour, like Dr South?

The farthest a preacher would go in these times of ours would never exceed the reproach once administered by Whitfield to his congregation, at Princeton (New Jersey). Observing that a gentleman had fallen asleep during the sermon, the preacher paused, and, striking a heavy blow upon the pulpit, he roared out, 'As I have not come to speak to you in my own name, I must and will be heard.' The sleeper was of course awakened by the noise. The preacher sharply eyed him and said, 'Ay, ay, I have waked you up have I? I meant to do it.' But it may well be doubted whether even so earnest a minister would have admonished a King to his beard.



XCI

PARIS NEIGHBOURHOOD

An American, who had visited both London and Paris, was telling his friends something about the particular points of superiority of each capital over the other. The London hotels were generally more comfortable than the Paris hotels, but English restaurants were not a patch upon the French. The Paris street traffic was very badly regulated, whereas the traffic in London was regulated in the most admirable manner. Public-houses in England were wretched places compared with the luxury and comfort of the *cafés* in France. The English railway companies were almost as intelligently managed as the American, whereas the French companies were about fifty years behind the age. The same thing could be said of the public conveyances. London was vastly superior, and Paris vastly inferior to all great cities with respect to cabs and 'busses. If a line of traffic in London was congested, a certain number of vehicles would gain time by deviating from the usual road. In

Paris, a whole file of carriages and 'busses, in a crowded street, would crawl a few yards, then stop a few minutes, and repeat the process again and again, rather than go out of the ordinary route. If crowds were, for one reason or other, attracted to a certain region of London, more carriages and extra 'busses would soon be put on the road to meet the demand. In Paris, *l'administration* —the most tremendous word in the language, and the most immoveable machinery in the land—would begin to deliberate upon the problem, when the necessity for its solution had ceased, and no extra 'bus would be put on the road to meet the emergency. The traveller showed that he had had his eyes open to some purpose, for nothing could be more correct than the observations he had made. As regards geography and language, his experience was, some people would say, less thorough. He had stayed three months in Paris, and just as long in London, and, having taken a delight in visiting the neighbourhood of both capitals, he could boast, he said, of being one of the few Americans who knew all the pretty places of interest which surround them. It was not easy to decide which of the two had the most beautiful neighbourhood, but it was easy to say which offered the greatest convenience for visiting the country around. London was first-rate; Paris was nowhere. 'I know the places around Paris well,' said he, 'and I have repeatedly gone to St Cloud, Versailles, Montmorency and Asnières, Fontenoy aux Roses St Germain, and all the others as well. But there is one place, and only one that, owing to the bad management of the 'bus system, I never was able to visit, although I tried many a time. It must be a delightful spot, for crowds of people were on their way there at all hours of the day—and from every quarter of the city there were 'busses taking you there. They were, however, all crowded Not once or twice, but twenty or thirty times, I made a sudden rush when I saw a 'bus on its way thither, but

day after day I failed to find a seat. After many vain attempts, I kept myself free from all engagements for two whole days, in order to succeed at last, at no matter what loss of time. But, no; 'bus after 'bus was full, full inside and outside always. And, would you believe it, I had to leave Paris without seeing the place, although thousands of people went there daily. There were not 'busses enough to meet the traffic.'

'That *is* odd,' his friends said, 'and what is the place? and what is its name?'

'It is called "*Complet.*"'

'Why, man, that is not a place, it is only a word.'

'Begging your pardon, the 'busses had the name in large letters on a board.'

'Just so. When the 'bus is full, the conductor puts the word "*complet*" up, to warn the public of the fact—since "*complet*" means "full."'

'I wish I had known this when I was there. I should not have made such a fool of myself. I thought "full" in French was "*plein*." Fancy all this bother for the want of a word. We had better let it be known.'

XCII

ALEXANDER IN INDIA

POETRY, systematising the legends created by hero worship, has given immortal fame to ancient chiefs, whose power had in reality been very limited. Monuments, on the other hand, have perpetuated the memory of a few kings whose greatest achievement was the construction of their own tombs. If the Iliad made Achilles for ever famous, if the Ramajana and Mahabharata made Rama and Chrishna, whether as gods or as men, indestructible types of conquerors, if the Great Pyramid made Cheops an everlasting name, surely a man like Alexander could well hope to be remembered in remote ages. The captain, the conqueror who had eclipsed Rhamses, Cyrus, Darius, and in comparison with whose figure that of a Cheops was a feeble shadow and a name only, could well believe that he deserved the admiration of centuries to come, with far better claim than imaginary

heroes or crowned builders. What a colossus he was by the side of the greatest Egyptian kings! What an irresistible leader he was even by the side of Cyrus! What a reality his life was by the side of the mythical existence of an Agamemnon and his galaxy of princes! A poet, an architect, had sufficed to magnify the Greek heroes and Egyptian kings, and give them imperishable lustre, though their lives had been insignificant; but he, Alexander, had no Homer to sing his incomparable deeds, nor slaves in thousands to raise him an eternal monument. He could only build cities more or less durable, he could only rely on the plain historian, to reach distant posterity. The historian's record would probably be survived by the poet's fanciful picture; the cities would decay, and would leave Cheops's monument standing still in all its grandeur. So that, after all, his glory, which dimmed that of past heroes as the sun dims the stars, might, in its turn, be obscured, not by that of future conquerors, but by insufficiency of records. Reflections such as these haunted Alexander during the years which followed the battle of Arbela.

When, after destroying the Persian Empire, he had gained the banks of the Indus, he was compelled to make them the boundaries of his own empire by the refusal of his army to proceed to the further acquisition of India. Before ordering the homeward march of his soldiers, a striking idea suddenly flashed through his mind. He had found no architect, no poet, but a device—and what he thought of, he at once contrived to do. He, too, might be deified in time to come! He caused to be buried deep in the ground, military weapons and appliances of ponderous size—large spear and arrow heads, huge swords, enormous helmets, immense shields, breast-plates, horse-shoes, bridle-bits, brassarts, greaves, cuishes—in order to make future generations believe that the conqueror, who had extended his rule so far, commanded and led a nation of giants. If this be not

a groundless legend, we must not believe that so great a man was, as some writers say, actuated by unworthy vanity; we must rather think that, after being declared the son of Jupiter Amon in Egypt; after adopting the oriental usage of imposing ceremonial to keep up his kingly prestige in the East — using pomp as a cnstomary piece of artifice in harmony with the means of Asiatic government—he also resorted to an expedient to resemble the immortals just as much as the most famous and impressive figures of remote antiquity. Were not kings identified with the gods themselves? He had a right to believe that; as time rolled on, historians would magnify his wonderful career to god-like proportions. Annals would thus prepare popular imagination to credit him with deeds not dissimilar to those of the hero-gods of the Hindus; and the discovery of gigantic weapons would confirm history. But it otherwise happened. For, soon after Alexander's return to Babylon, the Hindus, who had heard some vague reports about precious things hidden in the ground, dug the soil up and disinterred the relics of the king, so that his expectations were unfulfilled. But his present fame shows that Greatness wants no wile to remain eternal.

There is an anecdote related about him when he was in India, which proves that no intoxication of vainglory had impaired his wit and common sense, but that, like his father, he had a keen appreciation of what is fitting in trivial, as well as in important, circumstances.

There was an Indian juggler, whose main achievement consisted in shooting peas from his mouth, and fixing them on the point of a needle stuck in the wall five yards off. Alexander's courtiers begged their master to allow the man to perform before the court. The man came and astonished everyone by the skill he exhibited, for every pea he blew off was unerringly fixed on the sharp target. When the performance was over, the

courtiers naturally expected that such a marvellous feat would receive a recompense proportionate with the wonderment which most of those present had experienced. When, full of eagerness, some one inquired of Alexander what the suitable remuneration of the performer should be, he replied, 'Give him a bushel of peas.' Everyone laughed, and owned that, after all, a human being who passed his existence on earth in shooting peas with his breath, ought to be paid according to his merits, and a bushel of peas was just the reward such a man deserved.

It is quite possible Alexander remembered then his father's ideas on the fitness of things—in which case we may feel sure that the lesson about the flute had not been learnt in vain.

We think that Plato would have acted exactly like Alexander. The great philosopher was the only man of his time who did not admire a certain charioteer, named Anniceris, who drove his chariot a hundred times round the circus, without deviating from the track traced on the sand by his first course. Plato judged that a man who had applied himself so diligently to perfect himself in so useless an art was incapable of doing anything great or meritorious. A prince of our time would probably have presented the charioteer with a diamond pin, or subscribed to a fund to do him honour. Times have certainly changed.

XCIII

FEARLESS MEN AND WOMEN

FRANCE, during the reign of Louis XV. seemed so effete, the misery of her people was so universal, and apparently so irremediable, her policy was so unsuccessful and despicable, her public men were such failures, her aristocracy was so incapable, arrogant and frivolous, and her churchmen were so tainted with corruption and worldliness, that she seemed doomed to complete and irretrievable decay. Her soldiers alone were a credit to the ancient country, but if a mere courtier—like Soubise—commanded them, and that was often the case, they were defeated beforehand. There was, however, an inherent energy in her, of which her writers were the spirits and exponents, and which thoughtful men easily detected; but it was not sufficiently conspicuous

and palpable to be generally observable, and so the fall of France appeared to many to be within measureable distance. Yet the moment her vitality could be translated into action, she revealed herself greater, more admirable, more powerful than she had ever been before. Europe saw, with astonishment and dread, or with enthusiasm and sympathy, with what vigour she had been gifted by nature, and with what force she had been endowed by intellect. No one living in 1760 could have imagined the transformation which, within forty years, changed a herd of helpless and cringing slaves into a nation of heroic men, commanding respect, and imposing that respect wherever it was obstinately refused. It was in the Reign of Terror, and on the scaffold, when the guillotine had become the means of government of the Maratists, that the manly moral greatness of the French people struck the imagination most. All those who died for their cause—and they were legion—died with enviable heroism—with rare, very rare exceptions. Nobles and peasants, soldiers and generals, priests and civilians, women and men, youths and veterans, Republicans and Royalists, met their doom with equal fortitude and courage. The times had infused unselfish fervour into the veins of the multitude, and galvanised it to greatness, exaltation and virtue. Even those who had lived selfish lives until then, even those who had before then been indifferent and callous to feelings which draw sympathy, showed nerve and intrepidity.

The Duke of Orleans, Philippe Egalité, being on the platform of the guillotine, was being bothered by Monsieur de Paris (as Sanson was called), who wanted to take off his boots, one of the perquisites of the executioner. As the boots did not come off easily, the Duke said, 'Stupid fellow, leave me alone: don't bother me about my boots now, in five minutes you will have leisure to take them off at your ease'—a speech, which, by its spirit, has inclined students of history to deal

gently with the political perverseness of the head of the second branch of the royal house.

Likewise, when the guillotine tumbrel came to fetch for execution, the Duke de Lauzun, who was then taking his breakfast, he said to Sanson, 'I say, just allow me to eat another dozen of oysters. It will not take me five minutes.' Who could, after that, refuse to forgive many of the sins of the Lauzun family?

The journalist Carra, standing at the foot of the scaffold and waiting for his turn, said to the executioner, 'It is a nuisance to die now; I should so like to see the sequel to this.'

Standing on the scaffold, Champcentz, impatient at the slowness of the executioner, threw a silver piece to him, and exclaimed, 'Come, wretch, make haste! Here's something to drink.'

Isabeau, who had been Registrar of the Paris Parliament, was brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal, which sat in the very office he had used as his own for years. Fouquier-Tinville, the chairman, taunted him with the remark, 'I suppose you recognise this room?'

'Yes,' replied Isabeau, 'formerly Virtue tried Crime here; now Crime takes its revenge and condemns Virtue!'

'When, on a piercingly freezing day, Bailly, the blameless Mayor of Paris, was carted to the Champ de Mars for execution, and was reviled by the lowest rabble, a ruffian shouted, 'Coward, thy teeth are chattering from fear!'

'Not from fear, man, but from cold,' replied Bailly, in a calm voice.

And the mob saw he was speaking the truth, for he ascended the scaffold with a firm step and erect countenance.

History has recorded no nobler death than that of the twenty-one Girondists who mounted the guillotine together. They sang the 'Marsellaise' with one voice, and that voice only grew feebler as their number gradually dwindled; it only ceased with the life of the last victim.

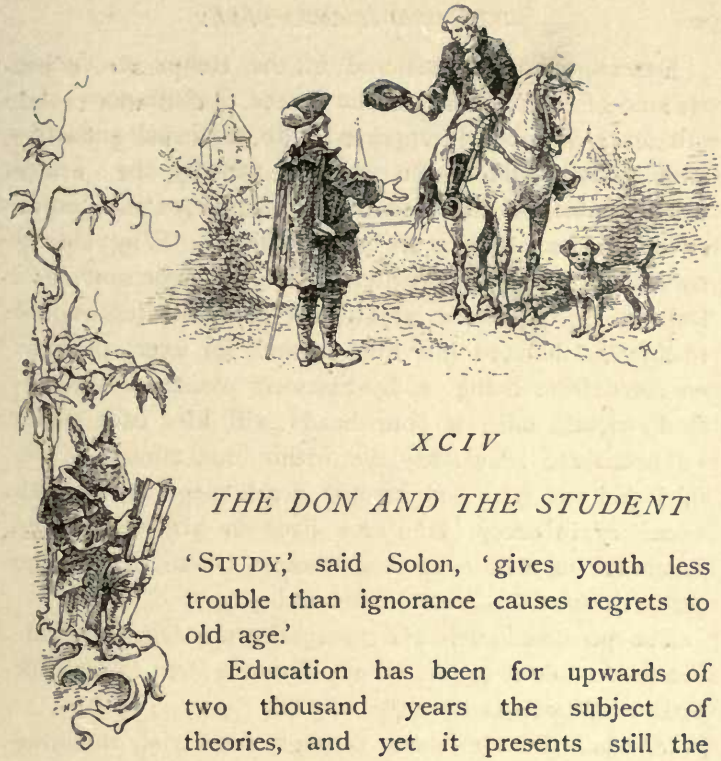
Danton, who had ushered in the Reign of Terror, was one of its victims. When in the executioner's cart with other friends, he supported, with his usual audacity, Camille Desmoulins, who was affected by the insults of the rabble, and deplored the ingratitude of the people he had helped to capture the Bastille. 'Why should you mind,' he said, 'the vociferations of that vile *canaille?*' And, on the guillotine, as Hérault de Séchelles wanted to embrace him to bid him farewell for ever, and was prevented from doing so by Sanson's assistants: 'Never mind, friend,' said he, 'our heads will kiss each other in the basket.' And they did within one minute's time. Thus did one who had caused death meet death, with indomitable daring. His idea lives in his work. The Revolution owes him its final success. Would that the means he used had been different!

But our admiration and sympathy are especially due to those noble women, whose firmness was so visible in their attitude and words.

Marie Antoinette went through her trial, mounted the scaffold, and died with the dignity of a queen.

Madame Roland's end was equally dignified and dauntless. When sentenced to death, she said to her judges, 'Thank you; you judge me worthy of dying with the great men whom you murder.' And this heroine of the Girondist party—who had inspired so many public men with fearlessness in their cause—also inspired her companions in death with resolution at the supreme moment. 'Oh, Freedom,' she said, turning to the statue of Liberty which was facing the guillotine, 'how many crimes are being committed in thy name!' And noticing that one of her friends, Lamarche, showed nervousness, she, in order to arouse his contempt of danger, begged Sanson to let her die first, saying, 'I am sure, sir, that you will not refuse this favour to a lady.' And Sanson consented with a bow.

Such was the mettle which the eighteenth century produced, and which insured the transformation of France.



XCIV

THE DON AND THE STUDENT

'STUDY,' said Solon, 'gives youth less trouble than ignorance causes regrets to old age.'

Education has been for upwards of two thousand years the subject of theories, and yet it presents still the same difficulties as at starting. Each period has had its system, each country has its method. 'If we were wise,' a philosopher said, 'we should limit the number and the scope of our studies so as to become thorough in each, and endeavour to make them fruitful by practice, for the best theories enlighten us imperfectly; they demand the material confirmation of experience.' Would this be sufficient? No; because if we take education to mean the progressive, rational, harmonious and complete development of all our faculties, the pursuit of a few branches would often fail to expand the intellect to the bounds of its capacity.

'There is no solicitude more worthy of the legislator,' said Frederick the Great, 'than the education of youth.' This is a sound aphorism; but when he added, 'Let education inspire young men with love of virtue and the fatherland, and it will create good citizens, the last

rampart of *empires*,' he narrowed the compass of education and showed that, in his view, its end was mainly political; whereas it is that and much more besides. The fact is that there is neither a formula, nor a system which embraces all the means and all the aims of education. Much can be said for any system, but the solution of the problem of education is rendered almost impossible by the variety and dissimilarity of human instincts, temperaments, inclinations, aptitudes and characters. At the outset is the question—Which is best—private or public education? Private education is doubtless the best and most complete; but as we are to live in society and as life is a struggle, it becomes necessary, in order to know the elements of the conflict, to come early in contact with the community so as to provide ourselves with offensive and defensive weapons, and so public education is the most advisable. School is the picture of a republic on a small scale. One of the defects of general education is that masters teach little more than literary and scientific knowledge, and being themselves often ignorant of the world, they are unable to prepare their pupils to face it. This, however, does not apply to the great public schools, the masters of which, in England at least, are usually well-born, well-bred men of good social standing. Another excellent feature of the education which obtains in these schools, is that the masters do not treat their pupils as children, but act as their companions, direct and share their games, treat them as equals, and converse with them as with their younger brothers. They lay aside that priggishness or that stiffness which often makes the pedagogue an object of ridicule. This gives the boys an ease and a confidence that will add to the advantages they have already derived from their home circle, and fit them for the world, the mart or the Church, the Bar or the Army, public life or social intercourse. But these advantages belong to the rich minority only. The bulk of the

nation must do as well as it can without them, and take its small share of education according to the organisation that obtains. What is certain is that instruction is indispensable. Whatever it may be it is the only means we have of improving our nature, of perfecting our faculties, extending our intelligence, fortifying our mental energy, acquiring reflection and solidity. One of the main benefits it confers is that it makes us teachable; we learn how to learn. That the education of women is still chiefly devoted to frivolous accomplishments is unfortunately true. Pleasant acquirements are necessary to women; but how many serious subjects does she not neglect which would provide means for a happy old age? Those who have been trained to love good authors and read good books will not find the days of aged solitude wearisome. They will converse with the poets and the men of science of the entire world, and will vastly prefer them to the vapid intercourse which society would offer them. Let us not forget Solon's warning.

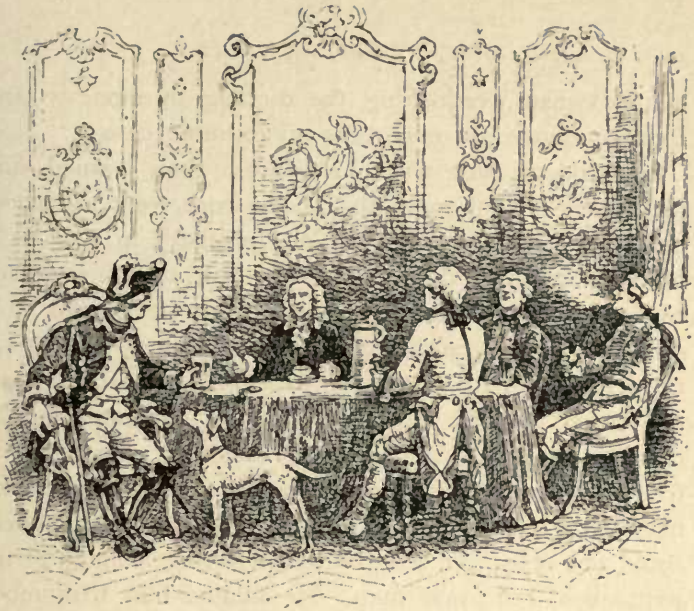
There is another thing which education should give or improve above all, and that is common sense—the best and perhaps the rarest of all boons. Yet it often fails to impart it or develop it, nay, it frequently destroys the little share we may have, and replaces it by conceit and presumption. Bacon's saying that, 'A little knowledge is dangerous,' applies to many of us, and in no case does it apply more fitly than in respect to common sense. The typical graduate, green from the University, is apt to forget that he has acquired only the minimum of learning, and to believe that, having reached the boundaries of knowledge, he can speak of everything with assurance. Should he read Huxley's Essays—not to speak of Spencer's—bearing on education, he would at once be able to gauge the vastness of his ignorance, and refrain from overwhelming his betters with his lofty contempt. To show the ridicule to which he exposes

himself when overlooking the dictates of modesty and common sense, we may take an extreme case.

A student, who was more jocose than learned, and loved pleasure far more than book-work, went up before the dean and examiners of a University in France in order to obtain his degree. He was not a little surprised to find that, despite his want of knowledge, his lazy schooldays were rewarded with a diploma. He took the leniency of his judges for lack of deep learning, and this belief inspired him with no little contempt for the reverend doctors. As he was mounting his horse in front of the hostelry to return home, elated with conceit, one of the examiners chanced to pass by. Our student could not resist the temptation of having a laugh at the expense of the grave man. He saluted him with mock deference and said, 'Mr Doctor, since it is so easy to obtain a diploma in your university, would you be so kind, before I leave, as to graduate my horse?'

'Mr Bachelor, I should be delighted to do so, but we can only graduate donkeys,' was the cutting reply.

It was now the young man's turn to laugh the wrong side of his mouth. If this reply did not teach him more wisdom than his long years of schooling his disease was incurable.



XCV

A WATCH FOR THE BEST STORY

THE system of taxation in France, up to the end of Louis XVI.'s reign, was so bad that it became one of the causes of the Revolution. It was equally ruinous to the population and to the State. The taxes were leased or farmed out to capitalists, who paid into the public treasury in a lump sum, or by instalments, the amount of taxation for which they held themselves responsible.

The Farmers-General—as these capitalists were called—enriched themselves by fabulous profits, and involved both the State and the French nation in insolvency. For, to recoup themselves, they exacted from the State a heavy commission on the one hand, and on the other, they demanded from the tax-payer twice as much as the Government intended him to pay.

There was practically no control over those finanical vampires, and no limits to the cruelty of their exactions. Salt was often taxed a thousand times its value! And

from inability to pay the salt tax no less than three hundred persons were made galley-slaves every year whilst eighteen hundred more were sent to prison. There was hardly any possibility of altering the system without overturning, at the same time, the whole of the administrative and political structure—because the great lords and ladies, courtiers, princes, and the King himself, received, by way of bribes, substantial presents from the Farmers-General, and all the interested parties were dead against a change.

When Voltaire was on terms of intimate friendship with the great Frederick, and a guest of the King, there were, almost every night, nice little suppers, at which all the famous learned men and wits of Europe who happened to be present at the Prussian Court were invited. In these convivial gatherings, stiff etiquette was put aside altogether, and the party was devoted to unrestricted mirth.

Good cheer, good humour, high spirits, sprightly conversation, witty levity were the programme, and everyone did his best to enliven the small hours of the morning, by exciting the laughter of the select company. One of the frequent amusements was story-telling.

One night Frederick showed a pretty gold watch to his intimate guests, and said it would be given as a prize to him who should relate the best story about thieves.

'No story of the Ali-Baba type, however extraordinary and romantic, will do,' the King said. 'Not only must the story be of the greatest robber that ever lived, but it must also be the shortest robber-story ever told. Such are the two conditions. Begin who will,' added Frederick; 'but I shall give you a story, too, for I have a pretty good one to relate, and it is only fair I should not be excluded from the competition because I am a king and a host. Besides, I should not be sorry to remain the owner of the watch to keep you all in order.'

'And because it cost money,' said Voltaire. 'For we will not suppose you purloined it.'

'Just so,' replied the royal host; 'now fire away.'

One guest, then another, racked his memory, or his powers of invention, and the stories told were merry and extravagant, but as no short-hand writer was present, history, unfortunately, has no record of them. They were pronounced excellent and entertaining. The wit displayed in them was fit for the king of wits. They had also the priceless quality of brevity, and Frederick avowed that, but for him and his own tale, he would probably have to break the watch to pieces in order to give each man his deserts. But he thought he would remain the possessor of the watch after all. And he began his story:—

'There was once a king—'

'And a queen?' inquired Voltaire. 'We have all heard that before—'

'Wait,' continued Frederick. 'There was once a king who went to war to steal a province.'

'That will do,' exclaimed Voltaire; 'we know him and all about his robberies.'

'Wait,' shouted Frederick.

'It is all right,' rejoined Voltaire, 'the tale is complete. You need not say another word. That king was the greatest robber of all the thievish princes that ever lived. But he was not the greatest of all robbers, as I am going to show if you will let me tell my own story.'

'Very well,' answered Frederick; 'tell it. But, mind you, I claim to finish mine, if yours does not beat those that have been told, for mine will put them in the shade.'

'Agreed,' said Voltaire, 'here goes! There was once a Farmer-General,' and he paused.

'Well, what about him?'

'There was once a Farmer-General,' I say.

'Well, go on,'

'I say there was once a Farmer-General. Hand me the watch,' continued Voltaire. 'I have told you the shortest story about the greatest thief that ever lived.'

'Upon my word, he is right! Here is the watch,' shouted Frederick.

And there were roars of laughter and loud applause.

XCVI

THE AMBASSADORS' TOASTS

THE ambition of eminent men, if it be the source of many evils, is always admirable when it is directed to the attainment of noble objects. This is the view of rigid moralists, and it is difficult to dissent from it. History relates the defeat of many ambitious designs; but it also records the success of wondrous aspirations, the fulfilment of which was attended with permanent benefits to millions of men. Even where the intention of vaulting ambition was frustrated in its realisation, the energetic attempts to achieve it led, nevertheless, to the unexpected triumph of some good cause, because no powerful efforts made in the accomplishment of a scheme are ever altogether lost. Some undreamt of consequence must necessarily ensue. Alexander's empire did not last, but it spread civilisation and extinguished a frightful despotism in Asia. Cæsar's ambition led to his assassination, but its object was secured, for it renewed the vitality of the Roman Empire for centuries. The Empire of Charlemagne broke to pieces, but it carried Christianity throughout Germany, and replaced weak and troublesome chieftainships by a State. The Crusaders' ambition led to dreadful disasters and failed in its object, but it resulted in unsought benefits,

bringing in, as it did, softening of manners, and giving birth to industry, trade, navigation, enfranchisement, wealth and a middle class—advantages vastly superior to the possession of eastern territories. The conquest of England by William I. was accompanied by dreadful evils, but it brought the country into contact with the Continent and founded a strong power that was, in the process of time, to engender prosperity to its subjects. Examples of this kind could be multiplied. In objects less embracing and important, ambition is not less conspicuous in its good effects. It cannot be denied that it is a devouring passion, often baneful, often insatiable; that it thirsts for honour, glory, the gratification of immoderate desire; that it is mostly unscrupulous as to the means it employs and indifferent as to the harm it drags in its train; yet it has, on the whole, been a mighty incentive of progress, and its valuable consequences have far exceeded the mischief and wrong which it has caused. It may be true that in many cases it is 'pride in action'; but it is true also that at times it is absolutely exempt from pride and proves harmless in its aim. Nay, its aim may be praiseworthy. A man whose ambition is to acquire wealth and station may exert his mental faculties and find a legitimate means to reach his end; he may create a new industry, a new process of manufacture, and bring wealth to his countrymen as well as to himself. He then becomes a national benefactor. Whether ambition is a reprehensible or a noble passion entirely depends on its object. Times and circumstances have also a powerful influence over ambitious men, and open a new horizon to them for the pursuit of success. In England, ambitious men will at present enter the parliamentary career in preference to any other to arrive at the highest rung of the social ladder; in France, under Napoleon, they threw themselves into the military profession; in Spain, until recent years, they went into clerical orders, and aimed at a See or a Cardinalate.

At the end of the Middle Ages the ambition of rulers was directed to two objects—their own aggrandisement and the establishment of order. To secure the realisation of their desire, they sought strong alliances, and this necessitated a new means of action—diplomacy. It was a great progress. For, although diplomacy was not always successful in averting wars—previously the only resource—yet, the new organisation immensely improved international relations and often assured the duration of peace. At first diplomatists, bred in the school of Machiavelli as they were, had recourse to spying, mendacity, cunning, trickery and all sorts of unworthy expedients to gain their purposes. Ambassadors were regarded as enemies. In our time, they are honourable men without exception, use none but honourable means and, as a rule, cannot be suspected of violating the laws of truth and candour. Ambassadors are regarded as friends. In the intermediate period—say two hundred years ago, diplomatists were still now and then guilty of deceit; nor had they, as yet, acquired the tact, the irreproachable suavity and moderation of speech, which are now the first elements of international courtesy. Ambassadors were still somewhat regarded with suspicion.

Nearly two centuries ago, the three sovereigns, whose ambition and rivalry involved Western Europe in war, were represented by diplomatists who were almost equally remarkable for their brilliant and conciliating minds, their correct and clear language, and their even and affable temperaments—men worthy of three great countries. Yet, even they did not always control their tongues, or forbear indulging in boasting to preserve their respective sovereigns' honour.

The Ambassador of France, at a foreign court, on the occasion of Louis XIV.'s birthday, invited all the diplomatic body to a banquet in honour of his King. In the middle of the dinner he rose, and raising his glass, he solemnly said—in allusion to the famous medal represent-

ing the sun instead of the royal effigy—'Gentlemen, I drink to the Sun.'

The toast was drunk with proper respect.

The Ambassador of the Emperor, wishing not to be behind hand in doing honour to his master, immediately got up and said, 'I drink to the Moon and the Stars.'

This metaphor was duly understood, and the toast was drunk in the same reverential manner as the former.

Lord Stair, who was Ambassador of William of Orange, stood up in his turn and, raising his glass with the most winning smile, said, 'Gentlemen, I drink to Joshua.'

This allusion to William's successful wars caused the toast to be drunk with smiles by one portion of the stately company, and with wry faces by the other.

In this three-cornered little tussle, the actors did not depart from courtly decorum, but the tilt they ran at one another shows the progress diplomacy has made since then.

XCVII

FRENCH AS SHE IS SPOKE

ACCURACY of accent in speaking a foreign language is generally immaterial for conversational purposes. Imperfection in speaking French, German, Italian has importance only if by faulty pronunciation you alter the sense of a word or make an idiomatic blunder. This is the only drawback: but sometimes it is a serious one.

An English couple went to Paris for the first time together. The lady had been in France repeatedly, and spoke French very nicely, whereas her husband did not know a word. The morning after their arrival, the lady, being ready first, went out shopping close by, promising her husband to return within half-an-hour. Passing by the porter's lodge, she said to the door-keeper, *Ne laissez pas sortir le fou.*'

'Very well, madam we shall take care,' the portress replied.

When the lady had gone, the portress cried out, 'I say, waiters, there is a madman upstairs; the lady wants him to be kept in, so you had better look out.'

As soon as the gentleman was ready, he thought he might as well go down to the coffee-room and wait there for his wife's return. He had hardly stepped across the bedroom door than four waiters, who were lying in wait, full of excitement, rushed upon him and tried to force him back, shouting to one another, 'Hold him tight; don't let him go! Take hold of his legs!'

The plucky Briton, seeing himself attacked by bandits, as he thought, defended his life and purse with splendid dexterity, and hit right and left with an art which showed he had not learned boxing in vain. In a few seconds, three or four noses were streaming, five or six black eyes variegated the natives' faces. But the attacking party, made furious by resistance, and soon frenzied by their partial discomfiture, closed with their solitary opponent on all sides, shouting, roaring and foaming. Finally they overpowered him. The victim was lifted off the floor, carried back into the room, and tied to the bedstead with a pair of sheets, despite the energetic remonstrances he never ceased outpouring upon the 'rascals, vagabonds and thieves,' as he was calling them. He was locked in, and his victors, proud and exultant, went down stairs to report the defeat of the madman, and, we may add, to apply raw steaks to their 'optic organs.'

When the lady came back, the portress astonished her a good deal by exclaiming, 'Ah, madam, he is a wicked one! He tried to run away, but they held him tight; and he is safe, we are glad to say.'

Up goes the lady, puzzled to her wits' end, and lo! . . . the shock to her feelings!

'What is the matter, my dear?'

'Matter, indeed! A nice trip! You call this a civilised country, do you?' And whilst she unties him, he relates what happened. 'What in the world did

you say to them when you went out?' he ended by inquiring.

'I told them not to let the fire go out,' replied his wife.

'I suppose you spoke French?' he asked.

'Yes, of course,' she replied.

'Why did you not speak English to them?' he said. 'Did you expect such brutes to understand their own language?'

'But, my dear,' said she 'they understood very well.'

'So I see,' the husband went on; 'you must have said something very queer about me!'

'About you? No, not at all.'

And remembering at once the precise words she had spoken to the portress, she nearly fainted.

'Good gracious!' she said to herself, 'I mispronounced "*feu*" and said "*fou*," and I said "*sortir*" instead of "*éteindre*."' But she thought she had better keep silent about this sudden discovery.

That mistake spoilt their trip. For though, after the unfortunate occurrence, the wife spoke faultless French, yet her husband had misgivings, nevertheless, and went on declaring that, after all, 'there was but one absolutely comprehensible language in the world, and that was the Queen's English as she is spoken. All foreign languages are just good enough for half-civilised savages, but too muddy and low for free-born Britons to use.'

XCVIII

QUAKERS

NOT many years ago—as late as the seventies—the Quaker community seemed to be a large one still. The antiquated costume of the 'Friends' was so frequently met with, and made them so conspicuous that they appeared more numerous than they actually were. Now that they dress like their countrymen and are not easily distinguished from the crowd, one might fancy that their sect has altogether disappeared. In reality, they are still to be counted by thousands. That they have decreased is, nevertheless, certain. Many of them, actuated by more worldly views than obtained formerly, have either become merged in those Protestant sects nearest to their own in spiritual matters, or have simply abandoned the exclusive views of their fathers. Each generation has, slowly but surely, so weakened their tenacity to their creed, that young men born of Quaker parents have married into Anglican families, and their sisters, from one cause or other—often from the natural desire of their parents to improve their future—have followed the same course. Be that as it may, if Quakers still exist in thousands, they are far fewer than they were. But how interesting—and on the whole, how admirable, they have been! What solid virtues they have exhibited—exhibited without ostentation!

That they hated war and tyranny did not make them superior to the people at large, for we all hold despotism and bloodshed in detestation, but they were consistent; they refused to bend the knee to arbitrary power and to fight for it. Their more estimable qualities, however—rigid morality and honesty, thrift and truthfulness, temperance and love of duty, brotherly spirit and disinterestedness, devotion to their cause and freedom from superstition, simplicity and steadfast sincerity—made them a model set of men. A history of the Quakers would be a delightful book, teeming with examples of manly and womanly nobleness.

But as human flesh is *human* after all, they share with us all some of our defects—only theirs are comparatively harmless. Of those minor faults which they had, and have still no doubt, and we have no heart to blame them severely, there are two—over-shrewdness and obstinacy—which characterise them and enable them to give a good account of themselves in the battle of life. Through these they have often come to the front in the professions and commerce. If Quakers have been caricatured for their dress, criticised for their customs, ridiculed for their dryness and lack of humour, we think the nation deserved satire—for other features—just as much as themselves; so that, on the whole, we ought to be very indulgent. 'Those who live in glass houses must not throw stones.' We shall therefore give the following stories in the gentlest spirit.

A Quaker living in a sea-port town was the owner of a small trading schooner. This boat was considerably overdue on her homeward-bound voyage. An insurance agent had frequently waited on the owner in order to try and induce him to insure his vessel. But the owner had declined to do so. Having, however, his fears aroused by his craft being overdue, he sent instructions to the agent to at once insure the vessel. But the agent, being alive to the fact that she was over her

time, was in no hurry to complete arrangements. Two or three mornings or so after, a note came from the Quaker as follows :—

'Friend, if thou hast not already insured my vessel, thou needst not do so, for I have had news of her.'

The agent at once proceeded to complete the insurance business, and then went up to the Quaker's house and told him he was very sorry, but the note had arrived too late and the vessel was already insured. To which the owner replied, 'Friend, I am sorry for that, for the news I had of her was that she was lost.'

Driving a gig along a very narrow country road a gentleman was confronted, about three-fourths of its length, at a bend, by another vehicle, the owner of which he easily recognised by his broad-brimmed hat as a member of the Quaker Brotherhood. The two horses stopped at once, and the gentleman said very affably, 'I am afraid, my dear sir, I must ask you to back your horse. I should back mine with much pleasure, but as you have only a short distance to recede, whereas I should have three times as much, it will be shorter and less difficult for you to go back than it would be for me.'

'Friend,' replied the Quaker, 'I have as much right to ask the same of thee. I fail to see why I should give way.'

'But, my dear sir,' the gentleman said, 'you have no more than a couple of hundred yards to back, and as I should have six or seven hundred, you must agree that you are in a better position to settle the difficulty.'

'I do not see that at all, friend,' was the Quaker's reply, 'and I tell thee straight that I should not think of giving way.'

'Oh! then, as you please,' the gentleman answered;

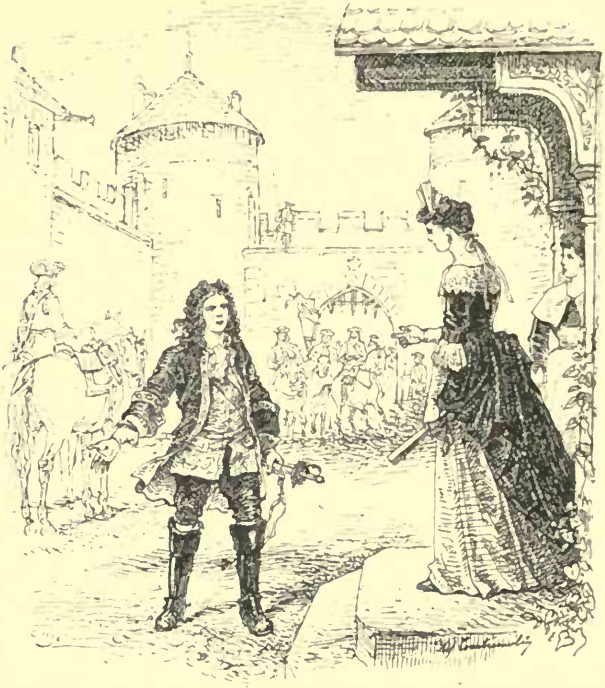
'I am in no hurry, and I can wait your pleasure.' And so saying he sat back and lighted a cigar, which it took him at least half-an-hour to smoke. When he had finished it, 'Well, now, sir,' said he, 'what do you decide?'

'I have told thee, friend,' replied the Quaker; 'thou hadst better back thy horse.'

'Oh! then,' the other said, 'I'll wait.'

And he pulled out a newspaper and read for about an hour, when the Quaker interrupted him, and said, 'Friend, when thou hast finished the paper, I hope thou wilt lend it to me.'

Upon which his opponent was so astounded that he took up the reins of his horse and backed him, accompanying the tedious manœuvre by a good deal of inward bad language and occasional audible outbursts. But the stolid Quaker slowly advanced, quite unconcerned at the subdued storm which was raging in front of him.



XCIX

THE LADIES' REVENGE

MEN have been unfairly bitter in their satire on women. In these days, however, when the new woman is becoming a power in the land, they lie low and dare not raise their heads much above water. But when they were masters of the field they took a mean advantage of their then recognised status to vent their ill-humour on the weaker sex, just as if chivalry were a vain boast. In antiquity their onslaughts on the fairer portion of humanity, owing to the subjection in which women were ungenerously held, were allowed by public opinion, and shocked no one. Custom had reduced wives and daughters to nothing better than domestic slavery, and physical and moral pain was inflicted with the utmost callousness. Had not Hipponax—a philosopher, and a poet besides—the effrontery to say, 'A woman gives only two days of happiness to her husband; the day of her wedding and

the day of her burial?' But then his ugliness was such, that had he had a thousand wives, not one of them could possibly have put up with him for more than one day, and the wretch vented his resentment for the dislike he excited in a universal impeachment.

Even such a genius as Cicero descended to satirical meanness towards women. 'How old,' he was asked, 'do you think Fabia Dolabella is? She says she is thirty.'

'That must be true,' said the great orator, 'for I have heard her say so many times in the course of the last twenty years.'

No wonder Fulvia ran her gold hairpin through his tongue!

The ancients, obviously, were unqualified to speak of women with the authority they justly commanded in other matters. We might expect to find an improvement when we come to the moderns, but among the moderns, Christians though they were, things remained unimproved for ages, and woman still stood as a traditional subject of unmanly satire. Bayle, right-minded as he was, and living at a time when so many great women had given radiant lustre to their sex, delivered an unjust and severe stricture on them. Being asked if he thought ladies could possibly keep a secret, he replied, 'There is one secret, but one only, they never divulge.'

'Which is that?'

'Their age.'

We all know Milton's low estimation of the fair sex; how harshly he could either speak of it or act towards it. Perhaps he was sorely tried and thought himself justified. But the poet Boileau, who had no reason, so far as we know, to depreciate ladies, wrote the biting epitaph which he meant to apply to most women:—

> 'Here lies my wife, and Heaven knows,
> Not less for mine, than her repose.' *

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* Ci gît ma femme, ah! qu'elle est bien,
Pour son repos, et pour le mien!

Dryden, too, was of a disposition that unfitted him to pass a fair opinion upon wives. Lady Elizabeth Dryden once exclaimed to him, 'You are always poring over those musty books; I wish I were a book, for then I should have a little more of your company.'

'Well, my dear,' answered her husband, 'if you become a book, let it be an almanac, for then at the end of the year I shall lay you quietly on the shelf and shall be able to pursue my studies without interruption.'

It is refreshing after that, to find, now and then, wives who can retaliate upon their husbands, and repay them in unmitigated scorn.

Madame Racine, for instance, was not much overawed by men, and she formed such a poor estimate of them, that she would never condescend to read one of her husband's tragedies, although the whole of Europe was in rapture over them. That was contempt with a vengeance.

But so benign and forgiving is the nature of the gentle sex, that women, nobly forgetting the long ages during which their kind silently suffered contumely, will rise above their tormentors and wish them to live on. Wives there are, and not a few, whose temperament is very different from that of Madame Racine. These can forgive a multitude of sins with that generous impulse which is one of the loveliest features of woman's character. We have nice examples of feminine sweetness and tender-heartedness on record, as a typical instance will suffice to show.

When Heinrich Heine lay very ill and was in danger of losing his life, his wife, who had just seen the doctor, came rushing to his bedside, and, sobbing, said, 'Henry, think of me; try to rally, my dear. I have already lost my darling parrot, and if you were to die, I should be thoroughly broken-hearted!'

These cheering words, and the gushing tone in which they were said, seem to have had a miraculous effect on

the patient, for he manfully fought through his illness, and was soon able to requite the affection his artless wife had so earnestly shown him.

There are also ladies, many of them—not interested parties, as wives are—who, letting bygones be bygones, will ungrudgingly acknowledge, if not the superiority of men, for this would be going rather too far, at least some of the good points men can legitimately claim. A gentleman, Mr M. F——, equally famed for his character and his works, was, in the presence of a very clever woman well known in her day, more than once the subject of conversation and much praise for his profound and extensive knowledge. This lady, who loved intellect beyond all things, became desirous of seeing him, so as to judge for herself; for, well knowing how men will conspire to puff one another up, she would not take for granted the accounts she had heard about him, and she flattered herself she would soon gauge the man and his learning. An introduction ensued, and, to carry out her purpose, she called upon him. The interview proved very satisfactory to both—to the lady especially. She talked on a variety of subjects with such splendid readiness and volubility that it was impossible for the gentleman to get in a word. But so great was the sagacity and fairness of the fair visitor, that when she left she handsomely declared that his reputation was not in the least overrated, as she had indeed found him 'a most learned, intellectual and delightful man.' Well may we doubt whether many men are capable of showing such generous recognition of the gifts and attainments of a celebrated woman.

The evolution of morals, manners and education has brought about a profound change in the relative position of the sexes. This alteration and improvement have in our time been carried to a point which promises to reverse the previous condition of things. Progress in this direction was already noticeable as early as the reign

of Charles II., and has steadily continued ever since without intermission. Women at last began to turn the tables upon men, and handle satirical speech with dexterity, much to the delight of the lovers of fair play, males though they might be.

After his defeat on the Boyne, James II. escaped capture by flight, under the escort of General Sarsfield's cavalry, and galloped headlong to Dublin. On reaching the castle, he tried to cast the blame of his rout on the chivalric Irish.

'Your countrymen, madam,' he said to Lady Tyrconnel, who came forward to meet him, 'can run very fast.'

'Your Majesty,' replied the truly noble woman, 'excels them in this as in everything else, for you have won the race!'

Meanness was stung to the quick—the King could return no answer.

Equally deserved was the rebuke administered by Mademoiselle, the daughter of Gaston d'Orleans, to the Abbé de la Rivière. This ecclesiastic had been the adviser of the weak prince during the civil war. Once he was praising the Duke of Orleans before his own daughter, Mademoiselle.

'Yes, I declare it loudly,' he was saying, 'His Highness was worth a great deal more than most.'

'You know right well what he was worth,' sharply said the princess, 'for you have sold him often enough!'

The Archbishop of Sens, not unlike many prelates of last century, was less rigid in his conduct than in his sermons. Madame Cornuel, who presided over one of the best drawing-rooms in Paris, and was acquainted with every notable man and woman of the time, from prelates to actresses, once heard a very severe oration delivered by Monseigneur de Sens, and this severity was freely commented upon. The witty lady delivered a judgment upon the prelate which was very soon applied to most Church dignitaries of the day. 'He makes

others weep for his sins!' she simply said—and no more cutting aspersion could really have been cast under the circumstances.

An anthology of such satirical speeches redounding to the credit of woman might be collected, but we must be content with only one more. One of the queens of fashion, the Duchess of Gordon, whose wit was at all times as ready as it was free, once came out of a great function, and cried to Dundas, 'Mr Dundas, you are used to speak in public; will you call my servant?' The advance we have made within the last fifty years would probably enable a fair number of ladies out of every hundred to emulate Lady Gordon, and even beat her on the same ground. Honour, nevertheless, is due to those fearless women who showed their sisters the way to emancipation.

C

ANCIENT WISDOM

THE wisdom of the ancients is so very striking that we cannot forbear reproducing some illustrations of it, despite our dread of the critic who may venture to blame us for daring to repeat what is familiar to scholars.

Anacharsis, though a Scythian, was so honoured for his wisdom that he was presented with the citizenship of Athens. An aphorism of his has lost none of its freshness. 'Grapes,' he said, 'produce three sorts of wine. The first, of pleasure; the second, of intoxication; the third, of repentance.'

Pytheas, Aristotle's daughter, being asked which was the most beautiful colour in the world, replied simply, 'That of modesty.'

Callimachus, the famous grammarian and poet, used to judge of a book by its bulk—a pretty good criterion

to this day, books of science excepted. 'The bigger the volume,' he often said, 'the more foolish things it contains.'

Simonides, hearing of a shipwrecked philosopher who had lost everything he possessed in the world, said, 'Was he a philosopher? As for myself, I carry everything I value within me.' This thought Phædrus put into Latin verse, as every boy may remember:—

Homo doctus in se divitias habet.

Sent over to the Island of Andros to demand payment of the tribute, Themistocles said to the islanders, 'I bring you two goddesses from Athens—Persuasion and Force—choose.'

'And we, too, have two goddesses,' they replied; 'Poverty and Impossibility—choose.'

Aristotle was once reproved by a friend for assisting with money a notoriously bad man, who was in dire want of common necessaries. 'I did not give to the man but to Humanity,' he answered, with his customary readiness.

Being asked what a friend was, Aristotle answered, 'One soul abiding in two bodies.' And to the question, 'How we should behave to our friends?' he replied, 'As we should wish our friends to behave to us.'

'Education,' he once said, 'is the best viaticum to old age'—one of the greatest truths ever expressed. 'The educated,' he said again, 'are as superior to the uneducated, as the living to the dead.'

'Education,' he said on another occasion, 'is an ornament in prosperty, and a refuge in adversity.'

'Hope is the dream of a waking man,' we are told Aristotle said; but the saying is also ascribed to Plato.

Having heard that he was slandered by somebody, he wisely said, 'He may beat me, too, if he likes, in my absence.'

Being asked to name the beast whose bite he considered the most dangerous, Diogenes replied, 'Of wild beasts, the bite of a slanderer; of tame beasts, that of a flatterer.'

Diogenes was at one with Aristotle with regard to education. 'Education,' he said, 'is sobriety for the young, comfort for the old, riches for the poor, ornament for the rich.'

He also gave expression to fine thoughts in very felicitous language. This is the prettiest: 'Blushing is the complexion of virtue.'

But he was especially felicitous in his repartees.

'What would you take, Diogenes,' he was once asked, 'to let a man give you a blow on the head?'

'A helmet,' he replied.

Many of our favourite sayings can be traced to the ancients—a fact we easily forget.

'Virtue in a young man,' said Socrates, 'is to avoid excess in everything.'

'Laws are like spiders' webs,' said Anacharsis. 'The little flies are caught, but the big ones pass through.'

Pallades said,—

> 'This life a theatre we well may call,
> Where every actor must perform with art;
> Or laugh it through, and make a farce of all;
> Or learn to bear with grace his tragic part.'

It was Pallades also who shrewdly said, 'A blockhead, so long as he is silent, is wise.'

Another saying of his is more serious:—

> 'It is on poverty only, but not upon me
> That your insolence leaves any trace.'

'Gold is best tested by a hard whetstone,' said Chilo; 'but gold itself acts as a test of men.'

'The riches of the mind alone are true riches,' said Lucian.

Æschylus showed his worldly wisdom when he said, 'Silence is a physician to mischief.'

And Sophocles is more famous still for his numerous aphorisms:—

'Good temper is woman's wisdom.'

'A woman's chief grace is a still tongue.'

'It is hope alone that feeds all mankind.'

'Even selfishness honours integrity.'

'He is rich indeed who is rich in discretion.'

'Brevity is the soul of wit.'

'Hope halves the burdens which despair makes double.'

'Deal gently with such as go unwittingly astray.'

'The limpet Envy clings to the rock of Greatness.'

But Euripides was probably the most practical moralist in antiquity:—

'Virtue travels through rough roads.'

'The better half of nobleness is patience.'

'No worthy man bears a grudge long.'

'Sleep is the medicine of our disease, the oblivion of our ills, our chief friend in sorrow.'

'He that has been long prosperous gets to think he has deserved prosperity.'

'Pleasure is a companion that robs a man of his manhood.'

'If thy inferior meet thee with railing, pay him back in silence.'

'Avoid the wretch that is at all times funny.'

'A wise man shows no man his bruises.'

'Wise men, like rams, fight only with the head.'

'In men and women, quick temper is better than quiet cunning.'

'We cling to hope, as drowning men to straws.'

It is unnecessary to say that these flowers of ancient wisdom could be multiplied a thousandfold. No wonder the poets and philosophers of Greece are called the founders of our civilisation! They deserve our deepest admiration and reverence.

THE END

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